This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

+ *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.

+ *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.

+ *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.

+ *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at `http://books.google.com/`

THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN
LIBRARIES
THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN
1817

R. F.

1904

We Women and our Authors

BY THE SAME AUTHOR AND TRANSLATOR

MODERN WOMEN: STUDIES OF SONIA KOVALEVSKY, GEORGE EGERTON, ELEONORA DUSE, AMALIE SKRAM, MARIE BASHKIRTSEFF, AND A. CH. EDGREN-LEFFLER.

Uniform with this volume, 3s. 6d. net.

JOHN LANE, LONDON AND NEW YORK

WE WOMEN AND OUR AUTHORS BY LAURA MARHOLM HANSSON AN ENGLISH RENDERING FROM THE SECOND EDITION OF THE GERMAN WORK, BY HERMIONE RAMSDEN

JOHN LANE THE BODLEY HEAD LONDON AND NEW YORK 1899

PN
56
.W6
H23

All rights reserved

1352358-190

CONTENTS

	PAGE
We Women and our Authors . .	1
Gottfried Keller and Women . .	23
Paul Heyse and the Incommensurable .	61
The Author in a Cul-de-sac (Ibsen) .	80
The High Priest of Purity (Björnson) .	100
The Women-haters, Tolstoy and Strindberg:	
I. Tolstoy	132
II. Strindberg	146
Maupassant and the "Fin de Siècle" Woman	179
Barbey D'Aurevilly on the Mystery of Woman	197
How do we Stand?	212

We Women and our Authors

WE German women are accustomed to look upon ourselves as an appendage to or a part of man. Up till now it has been the chief object and the pride of our existence to subordinate ourselves to him, and to look after his comforts. It is so no longer, or at any rate it is not as common as it used to be. Women have begun to ask: Who am I? and not: Whose am I? which proves that they are conscious of their individuality and wish to live their own lives. At present they are only helpless beginners filled with desires, needs and claims, which they themselves do not understand and which they would rather not admit. Their first longing is for outward independence, and in that they are not even original, as the economic conditions of the middle classes have long since forced women to exert themselves to the utmost in order that they may be self-supporting in part, if not entirely. And they are proud and happy when they have succeeded thus far, they fight for it in public and in private life, in the family, in Associations for Women's Rights, in newspapers, and in books where the movement has advanced the furthest. They fight for the first and rudest

basis of their independence, for the right to maintain themselves, which, while it is the lowest step on the way to freedom, is the one that gives them the first title to the possession and disposal of their own selves. It is by no means an aimless struggle, but it is a sad one, in which the woman only too often forfeits her most precious possession —her womanliness.

But there is something in the background, besides what a woman ventures for the sake of attaining her wishes and advancing her claims. Many women have not yet learned to express it, many consider it their duty to dispute it even to themselves, while some give way to the indistinct longing with fear and hesitation, and only a very few know what it is and welcome it with gladness and with the consciousness that through it their lives are being strengthened, and their souls and bodies beautified. Women have passed through a fresh development and have entered upon a new stage of their inner consciousness.

It was an event which it took the whole of this century to bring about, and which has only now begun to draw attention to itself and its consequences.

One of the causes which brought it into being was due to the authors of this present century.

There has never been a literature so rich and so full of variety as that which has surrounded us women of the present day. Woman has never played such an important part in the literature

of any century as in ours. It is not merely that writers have made use of her as a speaking-trumpet to say much that they could not have trusted themselves to say more plainly, but they have needed the woman herself in many and more various ways than was ever the case in former times. They wanted to have her with them in all that they thought and created, they needed her with her soul, her mind, her approbation, in order that she might make them strong, and give them confidence. Since the end of the last century there have been few literary or intellectual works, either during the classical or the romantic period, or about the year '48, with which a woman has not been closely connected. The relationship between man and woman had changed from its simple foundation and had assumed a tenderer, more delicate form. This betrays the fact that the men, or rather let us say the *élite* among the men, of this century have become more sensitive, more refined, more nervous. But the same is true of women, only that they have also become more self-conscious, and this is largely owing to the influence of the superior men of their time. It was an influence that extended far beyond the limits of personal acquaintance. How many young girls have experienced their first soul-rapture in fearful bliss over a book, and have felt their heart and the world and existence itself to be too narrow for their emotions! How many women there are who have been awakened through

the influence of writers in distant lands! How many of the tenderest emotions have been lived in secluded country districts and barren towns of which he, their awakener, never hears, although they are often richer and fresher than all the love that he has ever encountered! But the women who were thus moved could never grow entirely stupefied over the kitchen pot, nor could their minds be stultified with knitting, and it was they who became the discontented ones, who felt themselves thwarted and driven to despair by hopes doomed to disappointment; and these natures were among the first to go forth into the world, determined to become independent in order that they might find themselves, to become free, in order that their ego might speak.

If they had a real talent of any sort or kind they were sometimes able to work out their own self-development; but how many women, and many of the best women too, have only the one talent, and that is their warm-hearted womanly nature. It was just this that was a hindrance to them, that prevented them from elbowing their way out of their narrow, gloomy surroundings, and prevented them from attaining to anything higher than a teacher or governess, or some such position of dependence which necessitates a loveless and celibate youth—and they were not happy. Or else they married as best they could in their small circle of acquaintances—and were not happy either.

Some of these unhappy ones became the pioneers of emancipation, and stamped it with their hall-mark.

In the meantime the image of the woman in the author's soul underwent a surprising and rapid change.

The spirit of gallantry towards women with which the classics were imbued had soon disappeared. The writers of young Germany were already too much occupied in revolutionising the woman to do homage to her, and they had to be quick about it, for their own feverish spirits warned them that their reprieve was short. They drove her before them and rebuked her, saying that she was too timid and too luxurious to keep pace with them; they felt as in a wilderness without her, yet they had not the strength to drag her after them. They longed for her that she might rouse them and comfort them, and they found the time pass wearily for both.

They aroused the woman, awoke her out of a condition of vegetative ease, shook her personality awake, taught her to be discontented, to wish, to think, but they gave her nothing, and mirrored her indistinctly in their books.

The first to possess what they lacked was Gottfried Keller, and he possessed it unmistakably. No German writer has ever given us a truer, finer, more complete picture of the German woman. We meet with his models everywhere in life, whether it be in the great world, or in

small towns, or in lonely country houses. The woman who is good *comme le bon pain*, simple, honest, warm-hearted, merry, motherly, the woman who is generous as the fruitful earth, who understands everything from instinct, and who grows more submissive the more she loves — it is the temperament of the German woman in short, with all its native conditionality and indissolubility, with its homely attractions, its domestic bondage, and also with its little and all too simple perversities.

In Keller's writings the German woman saw herself for the first time reflected as in a truthful mirror, and she was astonished when she recognised the likeness and learned to know herself.

How many of us have been told by Keller what we are, and what we need, and what we endure, and what we ought not to endure! He became, what he least of all men ever dreamed of becoming, an awakener of women, and while he bade them glance into that part of their being of which they knew nothing, he awakened in them the consciousness of their personality.

In their surroundings and external circumstances, Keller's women belonged to a bygone age. The social conditions in which they lived were simple and primitive as their own souls. They were never in want, or overworked, and they had no need to earn their living.

In Paul Heyse's writings also there is no outward misery, no cruel restraint. But in spite of the

absence of this peculiar feature of the time, he too has become an awakener of the individual woman of our century.

In the first place he understood women. Not one of his contemporaries can produce as rich a portrait gallery. His success did not depend upon one or two special types, for he never confined himself to exteriors, however interesting. He understood women in all the impetuosity of their being, he had the intuition necessary for seeing them as they really are in all their various moods, and he, of all the writers of the age, was the only one who invariably respected them. By these means he introduced something into literature and into the nature of women which was destined to bear incalculable results, for by regarding them in every position and under all circumstances as individuals, he taught them so to regard themselves. Till then women had been accustomed to be more or less at the disposal of others—Paul Heyse aroused them to the consciousness of their own worth. He gave them the right to dispose of themselves. He led them out of mere vegetation into the light of existence and taught them to reverence their sex. He taught them the courage of individualism.

He did more. After having improved and enriched these women, he freed them from household drudgery, and gave them the grace and manners of the outer world. To a cultivated soul he added a cultivated mind, a fearless gaze, and

a certain *savoir faire* in all the circumstances of life.

In former days the German woman in fiction had been a native of the provinces, her chief charm lay in her romantic imagination, and she looked up to man with the trustful admiration that is born of inexperience; but Heyse's woman sometimes overlooked man altogether, she possessed the knowledge of life and discernment of one who had travelled and seen the world, she was a cosmopolitan with few illusions. She had a keen sense of proportion, and was in the habit of criticising every one, even the man she loved; she had analysed life to its core, and she knew the why and the wherefore of her affections, but her scepticism only made her love richer, fuller, deeper and more attractive than it had been before. She was innocent, not from ignorance, but from a certain delicacy of soul, and chaste, not from piety or duty or coldness, but from a finer cult of the ego, which loathes impurity as if it were actual dirt, and reserves itself for rare and noble enjoyments.

It was thus that we women encountered ourselves in Heyse's portrait gallery, at a time when we had reached our most impressionable age and were beginning to dream about life. We were made of pliant material, and a rough hand might have left its clumsy mark upon us, especially if it had been the hand of a favourite author. We shut ourselves out from our surroundings, we would not allow ourselves to be stamped with the dull

stupid sameness of the life in which we had been brought up, we stretched out our open hands to receive all that was brought to us by the precious, forbidden books, the books which made our pulses beat faster, and aroused from the darkest depths of our souls all that was capable of perfection in us. How many helpless women whose talents bore no hope of fruition have lived their youth solely in books and for books! And as though their hearts were the chords of a quivering instrument, Heyse played his tender tale of the far horizon, and sang to them of liberty, of spiritual greatness, and of the glory of woman, beside which the doctrine of self-renunciation which was preached to us at home and at school appeared ugly and dull in the extreme.

Then came Ibsen, the first after Heyse whose woman-problems were discussed by the press and in the family between the girls and older women. He succeeded Heyse in the souls of the younger generation, and put his stamp upon the women among them just as Heyse had done to his pupils in former times. But the daughters of Ibsen were different from the daughters of Heyse. They were poor people's children and had to earn their own living; they lived in mean surroundings without any prospect of improving them, and love was a luxury which they had not time to think about. They had grown up in poverty and were poorly dressed; they had over-exerted themselves in the "struggle for life" which sometimes attained the

dimensions of an entire philosophy of life; yet they too, one and all, claimed a right which they would not relinquish; it was the same which had been made by Heyse's women, it was the right to cultivate the ego.

Paul Heyse had pictured woman in her best moments, and under the most favourable circumstances of her development, the high days and holidays of life. But Ibsen drew our wretched, bitter, barren existence such as it was every day of our lives, he described our mothers, brothers, husbands, guardians and teachers as they only too often were, when they deprived us of light and air and expected us to be thankful for the little that was left, when they broke our wings and asked us in surprise why it was that we could not fly. He threw a fierce, penetrating light into the back parlours of the middle classes, revealing with a disgusting plainness the dingy make-believe of respectable family life. Horror and disgust, combined with a nervous longing to escape, to find oneself, to live one's own life in this short existence where so much had already been lost,—such were the feelings which Ibsen aroused with inconceivable intensity. I cannot better describe the influence which these two writers exerted over some of the most gifted women of their time than by quoting what one of them said to me on the subject. She was a woman who afterwards filled an important position in life besides attaining to personal happiness, and all through her own

courage and her own unaided efforts. "I was doomed to be discontented," she said. "I was born in one of the most out-of-the-way places on the frontier, amid social conditions worthy of Little Peddlington. At the age of fourteen or fifteen I read Heyse. He did not arouse me to rebellion, he only woke me quite imperceptibly to the knowledge of myself. He gave me a spirit of proud reserve, he taught me to respect my physical and spiritual nature as a woman, and to watch over my integrity for its own sake. He gave me a glimpse into the possibilities of great happiness or of no happiness at all, and he made me understand that one could not choose. He gave me a certain dreamy peace, which refreshed and soothed me. Ten years later Ibsen's books found their way into our nest. I read him and was beside myself. I lay on the floor and writhed with feelings which could not find expression either in thoughts or words. The people and the social conditions in his dramas were just my circle, my social conditions, my world. Never before had I seen so clearly what it was that bound me down and thwarted me. I saw that I must get away, that I should have no peace if I remained. Go I must, and at once! I had no connections anywhere, and I was ignorant of the world, but I went with a desperate faith in the one thing that I possessed—my scrap of talent. If it had not been for Ibsen I should never have gone. I lived for years alone in a strange country among

strangers, among people who were indifferent to me,—but I belonged to myself. I was free from the stupid tempers and prejudices of others. I read and thought what I liked. I belonged to myself! I supported myself entirely, and felt my personality, both intellectual and spiritual, struggling towards freedom. I owed nothing to my surroundings or to personal intercourse. Heyse and Ibsen were my awakeners and the guides of my life."

The curious thing in this life was that the influence of these two great antipodeans was held in the balance, and the one appeared as continuing the work begun by the other.

One would have thought that it was impossible, and that the influence of the one would not have allowed itself to be ingrafted on the work of the other. Imagine Heyse's refined sensualism beside Ibsen's negation of the senses! Between the disciples of the one, a comprehensive sympathy; between the others—no mercy. That there is no mercy to be found amongst the people of our day —that each one is imprisoned in the iron harness of his own interests—that was just the terrible news that Ibsen imparted to us in his dramas, when he urged us to help ourselves because there was no other help to be had.

Yet the figures of Ibsen's principal women are to be found in Heyse, for before Ibsen Heyse had already met with and understood the apparitions with which Ibsen has revolutionised us; Heyse

discovered the same highly developed type in a few solitary specimens which have only been discovered by Ibsen many years later.

There is Nora, for instance, who has become the platform woman. I do not think that anyone has ever explained in what Nora's sacrifice for her husband consisted. It rests upon Heyse's fundamental principle—the incommensurable, *i.e.*, that which cannot be measured by the common standard. In the essay upon Heyse I have enlarged upon this. In Nora's eyes love is the great miracle, the gift that one receives without having done anything to deserve it. In her eyes there is nothing above or below that can be compared to love. That is how she loves her Helmer. Social duties and other considerations, unless they are in some way connected with him, have no existence for her. Her husband takes the place of the entire network of engagements and obligations with which most people, especially women, occupy the greater part of their lives. Everything that is exists for her only in its relation to him; if it bears no relation to him, it has no existence for her either. Her love is her religion, her law book, her moral code, and the sole object of her being. And her great disappointment is this: that for Helmer love is not the incommensurable, it is not the thing which is of chief importance in his life. She had given herself to him entirely, but he had not given himself in like manner, and the discovery freezes her heart and

her senses. The much-talked of "miracle" in which she can no longer believe is nothing other than the awakening of the incommensurable in Helmer's soul.

Here we have the fundamental instinct of human nature which both Heyse and Ibsen, independently of one another, discover to be the absolute and all-ruling motive in the lives of hundreds of the women of their time. Heyse was the first to immortalise this variety, and in his *Children of the World* he calls her Toinette; Ibsen calls her Hedda Gabler. She is the sexless woman who is filled with spiritual emotions, and who, though utterly passionless, is a mistress of the art of attracting and fascinating the man, though the mere thought of abandoning herself to him fills her with a feeling of unconquerable horror. It is a type which has considerably increased in numbers and lost in charm during the last ten years; the woman who is really emancipated and entirely freed from man, the unmarried professional woman who is perfectly contented with her lot and who preaches happiness in independence—Björnson's apostles of purity with Svava at their head, or Hauptmann with his Anna Mahr and the brother and sister theory (*Lonely People*), which same doctrine is now being ardently preached by the aged Tolstoy.

Björnson's Svava is also forestalled by Heyse in the person of a young girl of noble family (*In Paradise*) who sends away her strong, handsome young lover as soon as she discovers that he has lived with another woman.

Thus we find that the heroines of the Scandinavian problem-novel are no northern discoveries, but are developments of this century who had their origin in real life, where Heyse, who understood women, found them, and made them known to the public in his writings long before the problem-novel was invented.

In the meantime external conditions have undergone a considerable change.

Heyse's woman was an aristocrat who was protected on all sides, but Ibsen's woman lived alone in the midst of that universal "struggle for life," which is the peculiar feature of our time, and Björnson's reformer was a woman of the people, who elbowed her way alone through the crowd, and preached morals to men.

From Russia, England and Sweden, the new type of woman gladly joined in the cry.

What a difference between the noble, spiritual-minded woman of Heyse's time and the women of Strindberg's creation! How changed was the image of the woman in the author's soul! The entire character of the age had undergone a great change in the last twenty or thirty years. Women had entered into the war of competition with men, and had really won some success in the battle. Numbers of fathers and brothers were released from the burden of supporting their unmarried women-folk; they were even released from the necessity of marrying them. Indeed, nowadays, many daughters and sisters work for their parents

and younger brothers. The world has grown more morose, and the whole of existence has assumed the appearance of an immense grey day of toil. Year after year competition grows harder, and every department of labour is overcrowded with envious, nervous, panting people, who are pitted one against the other. Merchant against merchant, author against author, man against woman,—all business people, all race-runners for their own gain, all struggling, restless, joyless . . . all in a rudimentary or advanced stage of degeneration. And woman keeps pace bravely. She keeps pace because she knows that this is the only possible means by which she can attain to the full possession of herself, to perfect independence, to the right to dispose of her own person; she keeps pace because she must either run or be downtrodden; she runs, because every one else runs, and she takes the matter seriously, as is invariably the case with beginners. But she expects a great deal too much. She whose bodily frame is so dependent on leading a natural and healthy life, whose brain gets so easily tired, sits on school benches and studies for junior and senior examinations, and goes in for higher educational courses, and continues with these until she has reached or passed her twentieth year. She then sits on in badly-ventilated rooms as an art-worker, a book-keeper, or a telegraph clerk, and if she is exceptionally clever and industrious and has the necessary means, she studies, and when she has finished, she is six-

and-twenty, eight-and-twenty, or more. After that the real work of life begins.

She is free!

True—but she is also a woman; or has she ceased to be one?

Many women have instinctively avoided this question, in the same way as they would avoid the subject of death, and they are apt to give way to an ugly exhibition of temper towards the man, but more especially towards the woman, who ventures to allude to it; but for all that, they cannot dispose of the fact any more than they can dispose of death. When they look at themselves in their glasses, they see that their eyes are tired, and their skin faded and pale from anæmia . . . they see that they are sickly and overworked; the sweetest instincts of womanhood are silenced within them, or are shown only by fits and starts. Work, always work; they have few pleasures, and even those few are often too much for them. Of what use is their liberty?

They look at themselves in another glass, and this time it is the woman's own mirror,—the works of her favourite authors. And what do they see there? It is no longer Keller and Heyse, nor even Ibsen. It is no longer those who first opened the eyes of woman, who handed us our youth as though it were a budding rose, and who let the zephyrs of spring expand our sails, while they threw open to us the door of life, and led us by the hand towards the man who loves us for our

own sakes, and whom we love with the whole strength of our being. No, these old gentlemen are quite out of date nowadays, and the woman sees herself in the writings of the new authors.

There she discovers that she is good for nothing, —a vampire, an ugly, sickly, troublesome creature, only capable of exciting a passing passion, that she is a burden which a man drags after him, a luxury which he can scarcely afford, an evil which is only borne from a natural compulsion, a thing that always remains strange to us, and with which we cannot have any real sympathy, to which we are only bound by a kind of instinct, a parasite that is shaken off as we grow older, and which we attack with our fists when we meet it in the labour-market. That, according to Strindberg, is the relationship between man and woman.

Or else a Russian barbarian—who was never even heard of in Germany until his best talent was spent—comes and denounces woman as impure, advocates childlessness, and preaches subjection and the suppression of the personality, preaches a servile self-renunciation, and will have nothing but the brotherly and sisterly affection of sexless men and women. From him woman learns to regard herself as a harmful superfluity who cannot become anything worthy of respect, until she ceases to be a woman.

She has no longer either the time or the strength to be a woman. Competition in the labour-market

monopolizes all her time and all her strength, she begins of her own accord to despise her womanhood, and to look upon it as a burden, while she persuades herself that a state of childless liberty is everything, and that work is the only satisfaction. This is because she has become an incongruous being, who no longer believes in herself as woman!

Nevertheless Strindberg was a great writer; he let woman gaze down into the abysses of her own nature, whose depths she had never guessed, and because he was afraid of her, he gave her an idea of her own power, such as was never dreamed of before.

Tolstoy too, in his younger days, has described the natural instinct of women as few have succeeded in doing, and he, too, was one of those who revealed woman to herself. But there was no good in either of these writers now that the confidence which had existed between man and woman had become a thing of the past. The source of their most intimate relationship was poisoned, the union between man and woman was changed into an ugly, brutal act, from which both needed to be purified, and above the yawning gulf that stretched between the sexes sat two fierce, suspicious-looking beasts of prey, who lay in wait for one another.

This was the latest revelation which woman received from her authors.

The well of her existence—the rich stream of her

life—was beginning to be drained, man no longer wanted it, he asked for nothing better than to be quite free of her. She had become a torment to him.

There is yet another generation which consists of quite young girls, and the latest school of so-called "authors," viz., our young naturalists.

They are there, no doubt. But these young people are the last to have any idea as to how they are to treat women!

Naturalism, as through a slight misunderstanding it is generally called, is the point of view taken by the Philistine in literature. In Germany it is through naturalism especially that the bourgeois spirit tries to become literary. These "authors" seem to say: "We cannot afford to waste anything, we have no superfluities, and we must do our best to succeed. Neither can we afford to give, we would sooner accept from others. For Heaven's sake leave us in peace with your problems, and with the woman-problem in particular. As a matter of fact there is no such thing as a woman-problem, there are washer-women, and there are Christian mothers, and of course there are family quarrels and hereditary peculiarities, just as there are free unions which end badly. Once we saw a girl student who fell in love—but in quite a sisterly fashion—with a book, and therefore we have the right to maintain that we understand women. We also knew a socialist who married a baron after having presided for many years over a mantle warehouse. And one

of our young girls actually went off on the spot with the very first young man whose acquaintance she made; but it did very well on the stage. We describe life exactly as we understand it, and everything that we do not understand is false and fantastical. Women are a useful institution as wives and readers, but in other ways they are as useless and insignificant as ourselves."

Authors are the most conspicuous feature of any given period. When they are not great precursors, they are like the little house-masters of a school—a rather more presentable example of the whole class whom they affect to despise.

What the little house-masters despise most is the populace. But then Tolstoy and Strindberg despise it also—the former the Christians, the latter the Atheists. Ours, which is the plebeian age *par préférence*, makes the same enquiry about everything that is brought under its notice: "Of what use is it to me?" And even the women are judged from this point of view.

The man of this weary, utilitarian age is half a decadent and half a barbarian. What does he want with the superior woman? Nothing, of course. She is merely an annoyance to him, a burden. If he is enterprising, he marries a well-filled purse; if he has an affectionate disposition, he marries a wife of his own class. The more cultured, more highly developed women are thrust on one side, nay more, they are starved. They have a gnawing

at the heart, a rankling distrust of happiness, of love, and of men in particular. They are driven to seek for consolation in their mutual affection for one another, and they refuse to have anything more to do with men.

This is the phenomenon which Maupassant, with the unfeigned astonishment of a full-blooded man, has described in *Notre Cœur*. His is the *fin de siècle* woman whose whole being has become unproductive, her intellect, her grace, her gentle nature, and even her powers of affection. Man is no longer there for her soul and her senses! She is self-sufficient.

There is no need to describe woman such as she became during the last half of the present century —how she developed in the struggle to compete with man, and how she was influenced from the point of view of personal independence—how she became free and became her own master, and won for herself a place in the history of her time—how she escaped from her subjection to man, yet could not forego him altogether—that is a subject on which there are a mass of confessions written by some of the most celebrated women of our time, by means of which many women are led to a better comprehension of themselves, and many men are able to find the solution to the riddle of woman which has been to them the cause of much suffering.

A portion of these confessions have been collected by me in my book called *Modern Women*.

Gottfried Keller and Women

I

THERE are some labours to which we sit down with a sigh, conscious of having undertaken more than we are able to accomplish, while at the same time the thought of it attracts us and we do not like to give it up. I have never yet read anything about Gottfried Keller which seemed fully to grasp the real nature of the man with the secret of his separateness, and to place him before us with a certainty of comprehension such as cannot be gainsaid. He is something so complete in himself, so apart from others, that like all good things there is no getting round him. For the essence of good things consists in being so sound that there is no use in coaxing or persuading them, or in trying to discover a fault in them; and for that very reason these old jesters studied the noble art of rendering themselves inaccessible. As an author he wrote only when he felt inclined, and when he was not in the mood he waited—whether for months or years it was all the same to him. As a man he was so reserved that hardly a single one of his personal experiences found their way to publicity, and after his death it might have been supposed that he had never had any, if Jacob

Bächtold had not published a collection of his letters under the title of *Gottfried Keller's Life*, in which he speaks to us as one more alive than the living who are still among us. In reading his books we notice that the purer incidents are mingled with others of a more confidential nature, and it dawns upon us that he understood how to choose his incidents, so that afterwards they should not tell tales. This fact proves, in the first place, that he had nothing to do with those whom Nietzsche would call "literary women," this being a silent memorial to his good taste and noble character. Secondly, it proves that he understood how to choose his society, and that, like a prudent Swiss, he never thoughtlessly confided in any one, but remembering that the world is not so good and particularly not so refined as it might be, he preferred to keep his confidences to himself. Thirdly, that he, like a righteous man, was pleased to live until those who had known him in his foolish youth had died before him with all they knew.

A vase filled with anemones, violets, ranunculuses and other spring flowers is standing on the table in front of me as I write; I took the trouble to fetch them out of the wood so that I might have something alive and sweet-smelling near while I think of Keller. Otherwise it would have been impossible to write about him, for his books are the essence of life and gladness.

The spirit of playfulness which, as he tells us in

Green Henry, drove him when a child to try all kinds of experiments, has followed him through life in the treatment of his literary characters, who, by the way, are never inventions, but always studied portraits. Suddenly he seizes them by one leg, swings them round, and sends them flying into a purely fantastical no-man's-land, oblivious of past events and present circumstances and such-like limitations. All his stories, or at any rate the majority of them, are marked with this feature, and the maddest confusion reigns side by side with some of the greatest psychological realities; take, for example, the end of *The Poor Baroness*. How to account for it? Is it that he had inherited the æstheticism of the romantic school? But considering that he was a man of sober temperament and not in any way romantic, it is more probable that the true reason to account for it is that he wrote only for himself and for his own satisfaction. In his youth he had been afraid of Providence and had fought a duel to prove the existence of God; in riper years he amused himself by trying to improve Providence, to put the crooked straight, to punish the wicked and reward the good, and act as though he were himself a more practical and zealous Providence. If, when he had finished, the public read it, what had that to do with Gottfried Keller? The public might rejoice if now and again he played at being its teacher and gave it a sound thrashing on that part of the human body which was especially

intended for the purpose. Besides he was a Swiss, and it never entered his mind to trouble himself about the rest of the world. There is one special feature in Gottfried Keller's productions which, since the publication of his letters, has found expression in words, and which offers a very drastic contrast to the works of later authors. It is this—that he never allowed dust to be thrown in his eyes by any one, least of all by foreigners.

When he, in the person of "Green Henry," forsook the narrow surroundings of his home life and went out into the wide world, he believed that everything good, strong, free and new was to be found abroad.

After a long journey, undertaken for the sake of his education, "Green Henry" returned to his home wiser than when he left it. He became a Swiss in the superlative case—the Swissest of the Swiss. But although he had occasion to see all the frailties and follies of Europe disporting themselves in his beloved native land, he did not include foreign countries in the blame. He possessed the same sensible, confident self-assertion that characterises his honest fellow-countrymen who, while they are ever ready to assist strangers in a polite and blameless manner to rid themselves of their superfluous coin, always remain in their behaviour towards them as unaffectedly, great-grandfatherly, considerate and true-hearted as before.

In that Keller is quite old-fashioned. All other writers, at home and abroad, are anxious to change their skin, and complain bitterly because they cannot. Keller stretched himself in his with an expression of well-being that was positively annoying, and declared that it was a very good skin. He was still more old-fashioned in that he never sought for a problem, and never made anything of one, although he produced them by the bushel and left the precious gems lying scattered throughout his novels. Wherever he went, the strangest, most profound things seemed to cling to him like burs from roadside ditches. But the only use he made of them, when he did not immediately throw them away, was to play a little game of football with them. Three such problems, as he squandered by the dozen, would be sufficient excuse nowadays to call forth a new German literature with a new set of publishers, but he was so essentially old-fashioned in those matters that he was quite unconscious of the scope of his material, and was certainly not what we should call an "earnest" writer. He was old-fashioned in other ways also—for instance, in his best moments he possessed an individual language of his own which was quite unmistakable, and which seemed to have fallen from the clouds, no one knew how. Our modern authors, on the contrary, are always working in the sweat of their brows in the hope of obtaining an original style, and that without the smallest chance of success.

Keller was like a ploughed field where the rooks hop about in search of nourishment, and he has enough left still to fatten many rooks.

Yet there is one point in which our good little Keller is more modern than the most modern men of our time, and that is in his knowledge of women. It pleased the old *Pankraz, the Cynic*, to write a great deal about women, although he never allowed himself to be secured in visible chains.

Of all German writers, Keller is the one whom we are least able to understand with our unaided intellect. For in order to understand him, we must feel him, and he is far too reserved to admit of every one's feeling him. Special qualifications are needful, and our modern society takes good care that these special qualifications should not exist for the great mass of sensitive readers.

Both as a man and as an author, Keller is distinctly a lover of fresh air, and for that reason he keeps all genuine townsmen at a suitable distance. It is true that they snuffle round him and become intoxicated with the strong scent of the woods and meadows, but it is just this exaggerated enthusiasm which forms as it were a Chinese wall between him and them. Keller needs to be passively enjoyed, in a waking sleep, like the peasant following his plough, or a person wandering in the mid-day sunshine, or a child resting in the arms of its mother. Keller as an author is the personification of the quiet equanimity of natural health.

At the same time he is by nature a recluse. He is that in spite of the patriotic social duties during the fulfilment of which the majority of his books were written, and even in spite of his zeal for Swiss assemblies. He is an eavesdropper; not in the sense in which a lyric poet may be called one, to whom every outward movement becomes an inward emotion, but rather as the born thinker whose sympathies live in all that moves around him, and whose own life is such still water that every picture cast upon it is clearly reflected. His affections are no dangerous whirlpool, but a quiet sympathetic companionship, to which meeting and parting are not the cause of any heart-breaking commotions.

This is the reason why Keller is not a writer suited for summer sportsmen who breathe in the country air as though they would like to lay in a store, and who wish the sun to shine full upon them.

His chosen confidants are those who are accustomed to spend their lives in the open air.

This devotee of the open air had his circle whom he described and his circle whom he did not describe. The circle whom he did not describe consisted of those who were born ladies, and them he left severely alone. But if, on a special occasion, he finds them necessary for some incident which must be told, he arranges it so that he may have the opportunity of rebuking them, as with Lucie in the book already mentioned,

Pankraz, the Cynic, or as in the case of the busybodies in the story of poor Regina. When he describes ladies with sympathy, as in *The Governor of Greifensee*, he transfers them into a period at least a century ago and places them in the open air.

The women with whom Keller consents to have any dealings must allow themselves to be placed in the open air. Freshness by candle-light has no attraction for him, and as for beauty in a drawing-room—he is suspicious of it. Out they must go, without gloves and veils, stiff collars or steeled stays, without any of the paraphernalia to which modern literature is generally so much addicted. If you can allow yourself to be looked at full in the eyes, with sleeves tucked up and crumpled—then and only then Gottfried Keller may perhaps stop to consider whether it is possible to write about you.

Gottfried Keller's portraits are nearly all open-air studies, and Gottfried Keller's women are nearly all lovers of the open air.

There are wonderful disclosures in his great portrait gallery; we find there the women whom he loved as well as the women whom he hated. Wherever he describes a virtuous, happy, loving, teasing, laughing woman; wherever he pictures Eve in whom Adam finds his happiness, or Eve who finds her happiness in Adam, the decisive moment is sure to take place in the open air, for the scenes out of doors are the principal points

in his writings, the principal points in the soul-harmonies of his characters, the moments when love steps forth from her concealment and the lovers understand one another. *Romeo and Juliet in the Village* spend their wedding day out-of-doors; the neighbour's children in *The Company of the Seven Just Men* devise their plan of association out-of-doors; the married couple in *The Lost Smile* meet again out-of-doors, after having been separated by various domestic circumstances; in the *Misused Love Letter*, the innocent little woman comes to the still more innocent little schoolmaster out-of-doors; the heroine in *Ursula* regains her senses during the fearful night spent out-of-doors; in *Dietegen*, the situation between the hero and his lady-love reaches its climax out-of-doors; *Frau Amrain*, when she has an affair of importance to discuss with her son, always goes to look for him out-of-doors; and nearly every time that *Green Henry* feels his heart beat for a woman, it is out-of-doors. With Keller all good people are lovers of the open air.

Sedentary natures, on the contrary, are generally characteristic of persons in whom it is wisest not to place much confidence. There is always something ludicrous connected with them, and they are always unfortunate in one way or the other. They are often jealous, conceited, vulgar, pale-faced and dirty, whereas fresh cheeks are always accompanied by a pleasant atmosphere. The three *Just Comb-*

Manufacturers with their miserable follies were all sedentary people; *The Maker of His Fortune* and Herr Litumlei were provincials, while all the wretched inhabitants of Seldwyler sit in absolute idleness in their little workshops; the tailor, in *Feathers make the Bird*, became an extraordinary creature in consequence of the sedentary life which he led; and whenever Keller wishes to draw the character of an insignificant woman, he makes her sit in her room doing nothing, or engaged in some silly occupation, or else running in and out of other people's houses. The story of poor Regina is the only one of Keller's stories in which a good and beautiful creature is misunderstood and made to suffer, and there all the principal scenes are enacted in large and gloomy town houses, where the heavy front door serves as a symbol to show the impossibility of escaping out of a bewitched circle into the light of truth and freedom. Regina, who was a true child of the outer air, would never have gone to her ruin if she had been placed in different surroundings.

Fresh air is the one condition which Keller takes as the starting-point for his portraits of women, and it is a condition which is quite original in its way, for it is not as decidedly expressed in the writings of any other author, least of all a modern one. His women must have plenty of air, fresh air, air in which they can move their limbs and which penetrates their clothing. His women are not the productions of culture, nor the fruit of

education, they do not belong to the species of "clever daughters," but neither are they idealised country girls, they are not phantoms, and they are not discoveries, they are living human beings whom he has seen and known, they are personified reality like the trees, the meadows, the cows—they are fragments of nature placed in the midst of other fragments of nature.

They are not Keller's ideal of what a woman should be, they are exact descriptions according to his knowledge of what women really are, as it pleased him to write them down for his own amusement during idle evenings when he sat over his wine.

It is human nature as the Swiss understand it, human nature personified and at the same time purified, which moves him to describe women whom he has known or whom it would have amused him to know, and he describes them with lively little flourishes here and there.

They came upon him unawares, and he let them do as they pleased and write themselves down as best they could, but gently and slily he held them fast by the hair, lest they should try to mystify him. And if they began to throw dust in his eyes, he gave their hair a gentle pull so that they might know that he was watching them.

Gottfried Keller was a just man who gave every one their due, including women.

Here I should like to make a disgraceful confession, and to remark that, in my unworthy estima-

tion, he—in the great forest of German authors —is the first, the last, and the only one who thoroughly and entirely understands the natural woman.

Keller's woman is nothing but nature, unadorned and unfalsified; it is true that she is not the whole of nature, but she is a genuine part of it. In order to discover this woman, he journeyed in a circle round the towns to every road which marks the boundary where town and country meet. There he sometimes met with women who had a natural disposition to live, without having learned anything from books. According to him it was the sign of a praiseworthy woman that she should know where to find her husband, and as to those who were more or less bunglers in the matter, he refused to waste his time upon them. He went straight to the root of the question, like a man who will not allow himself to be deceived, and according to his knowledge of human nature the principal business of every young woman was to find the man who was best suited to her, and having found him, to win him. This is just what Keller's young women were busily engaged in doing, and they accomplished it in various ways, without being in the least aware of it, or, if the reader prefers it, though it comes to the same in the end, they did it out of their moral consciousness. But it was not enough for Keller that they should have proved their true womanliness by these means alone, more was necessary; they must be able to keep their

husbands, and that again without conscious effort ("moral consciousness" would be quite out of place here), they must be able to keep him by means of their personal attractions and that magic charm of womanhood which it is impossible to analyse, by which the man is made too happy and too contented to have any wish to escape. When our honest author had got them thus far, he took delight in adding to the story the welcome intelligence that they lived long, had many children, and that their race prospered and increased.

II

There is an old word that was often used in Germany during the merry days of the Renaissance, and it had a beautiful sound, although at that time its actual signification may not have been beautiful. It is the word Courage-giver. The expression first came into use among the knights of the German Order in Prussia and Livonia at the time when history tells us of their downfall, *i.e.* when asceticism began to decline. When a knight of that period had sufficient disregard for his eternal salvation to procure himself a lady-love, he called her his Courage-giver, because she gave him renewed courage. But as soon as the Lutheran pastors, with their protestant ideas about conversion and discipline, opposed this being who was not acknowledged in the

service-book, the good word came to have an evil sound. But when one wishes to describe Keller's women, the old word suggests itself again, for his women are good Courage-givers; they are bright as a spring morning which expands the heart and rejoices the soul of man, refreshing as the first verdure of the year, and sweet as the young, juicy grass of the meadows.

Where did Keller learn to know these women who are such genuinely natural beings, such harmonious, unspoilt, sensitive natures? Where did he first see Judith, little Meret, his village Juliet, and the numerous other revelations in his portrait gallery? In this respect Gottfried Keller stands alone and unequalled by any in his century.

We have only to turn to the classics. Schiller's woman was composed of little else than a long skirt, and the same may be said of his entire progeny of sentimental and pathetic dramatists extending down to our own time. If one took away the skirt there was something underneath it which bore a strong resemblance to a young man, a being who was half a man in its actions and feelings, just as the women in Lessing's dramas are, for the most part, dialecticians in veils and stays. At the end of the last century and the beginning of this there were no less than an entire group of authors who were remarkable for their inability to create women, and they tried to make up for it by introducing their own nature into that of the opposite sex. Even Kleist sometimes

resorted to this method. It was the origin of all their heroines who inspirited men to brave deeds and encouraged the faint-hearted, from the Maid of Orleans onwards, they were nothing but men split in half; the authors personified their own grand qualities and then contrasted them with their own weaknesses in the person of the woman.

The century advanced, and woman in German literature was and remained the superior being, the exalted being, the more loving being; it was always she who was the most energetic in love and who led the way to action. Compare the writings of Gutzkow and Spielhagen. It was woman who made man happy with the gift of her love, it was she who condescended to the worshipping man, while he rejoiced in her love without exactly understanding it. Woman stood upon a pedestal, indescribable, incomprehensible, she was "the exalted woman." Some partial authors designated her in high-flown language as "sublime." This sublime woman, whom men were made to worship with an ecstatic reverence, played a favourite part in the novels of second-rate authors and authoresses whose works were most popular in lending libraries.

There was not the faintest trace of anything of this sort in Keller's novels. There was no perverseness there, no amazement, no holding up of the hands in adoration. There were none of those strange moods which a man is said to respect although he cannot understand them, and

which have provided a subject for many volumes, and problems for as many authors.

In his representation of woman, Keller very nearly falls out of the frame of this sentimental period.

What can be the cause of it? What was the sombre influence which failed to influence him, while it united the other writers of the different schools, the writers of the classical age, of young Germany and of the older period? Why is it that he is almost the only one in whom there lurks no trace of the bombast style or the high-flown phrases of the "storm and stress" and the eight-and-forty period?

The answer to both these questions is the same. He is, so far as my knowledge extends, the only one among all the German writers of the century who has either wholly escaped from, or been completely unsusceptible to, the Rousseau epidemic in its various forms of inoculation.

This undoubtedly proves Keller's superiority to the other authors, both as an individual and as a man with regard to women.

It was Rousseau who introduced the worship of woman into literature, and likewise her superiority, and her resemblance to man.

There were, as we ascertain from reading Rousseau's *Confessions*, not only psychological but also physiological reasons to account for this, and here the modern student of culture may find fresh ground for enquiry.

Rousseau was the author who introduced something entirely new. It was Rousseau, the half Frenchman, who introduced the element of high-sounding sentimentality into a literature which had hitherto known nothing of it. It was Rousseau, the bourgeois with the character of a plebeian, who introduced a new class into literature, a class which had grown up in a time of revolution; it was he who introduced the feelings of a plebeian in relation to a woman of higher birth than himself.

This man was one of those by no means rare specimens of persons who are born with perverse sexual instincts, who have more than once been known to exercise a secret influence on the direction of human thought and feeling. He could not feel as a man in relation to a woman, he felt strongest towards her as her offspring, her subject, her slave. He felt impelled to raise her above him and to amalgamate love with filial affection, and this was how the "exalted woman" found her way into literature.

Rousseau influenced the younger writers of Germany. The literature of the *ancien régime*, which had helped to form the early youth of Lessing and Goethe, had been frivolous and chivalrous, but not in any way distorted. It was Rousseau who introduced the distorted element, intermingled with his theories about liberty and fresh air, for in this latter respect he was as Swiss as Keller.

The younger writers became filled with revolutionary ideas, they went into ecstasies over Rousseau and wrote like him. The impulses which he had inspired continued to bear fruit in the works of popular writers long after the Germany of our century had ceased to read him.

The number of ideas will not bear comparison with the number of their promulgators. It is a well-known fact that a very few commonplace ideas are sufficient to nourish the intellect, for ideas in themselves are of no great importance however much they may be pushed to the fore. Impulses are of chief importance. Ideas have only to do with thinking, but impulses distrain body and mind alike, and a given impulse is like an acoustic vibration which ebbs and flows in numberless vibrations, and dies away so gradually that one cannot say for certain when it has stopped. Yet an impulse may be the result of mere chance, and it is so generally. A young, strong, excitable race, in which the strength of generations is collected, stands waiting for an indefinable "something" which shall correspond with its embryo condition. This "something" comes, and the fruitful soil procreates it over and over again, until the land is exhausted by the same seed and reproduces it weaker and weaker. A new literature is always accompanied by a new conception of woman, because woman is the author's chief point, and in that respect he is like

the bird in spring who sings as he goes in search of his little mate. Yet Rousseau's personal views of woman, united as they were with a national temperament which was full of deep feeling, though without much faculty for observation, was destined to bear fruit for a hundred years in a literature where a thousand figures bear witness to their origin.

When the German Empire was founded, German literature became extinct. Germany became the land of manhood *par préférence*, and the worship of woman was treated as a myth at which people sceptically shook their heads. But in the fundamental conception of social democracy the myth descends upon the earth under another form.

Perhaps it is because all eyes are now turned in a different direction that no one has noticed the inner freedom, the inconceivable stamp of personality that betrays itself in the manner in which Keller gazes at woman. That Keller does not reflect with her, that he does not idealise her, these are the distinctive features which form as it were a key to the right comprehension of Keller's women.

If we examine his characters one by one they will soon shew us of what material they were made.

Gottfried Keller had two starting points from whence he depicted woman, and which appear to have come so naturally to him that it is impossible to suppose that they cost him much thought; we,

however, give them our attention, because, in the first place, we are in search of another literary basis, and, secondly, because on these two points he is essentially a child of the age with which he otherwise has little in common. One of his starting points is the simplification of life and of woman, and the restriction of the same to decided, easily varied, and primitive forms. To this many will object that the scheming thus involved is a mistake with which Keller, least of all men, deserves to be reproached, for he is essentially one of Germany's richest authors and the one who possesses most strongly the creative faculty. But for that very reason, because he is rich, it is all the more important to examine his works and to discover how small is the amount of material hitherto made use of in the literature, not only of Germany, but also of France and Scandinavia. Keller introduced the true and authentic psychology of a healthy woman, of whom he himself says in *Ursula*: "She was like a little spot of fruitful soil which turns green again as soon as it is refreshed by a ray of sunshine and a drop of dew." This psychology originated with simple conditions of life and less complicated personalities than those which surround us nowadays, when fifty years have gone by since Keller's youth—youth being the most impressionable period of human life. Whenever we stop to observe the characters of people who have attained to a certain height of spiritual

culture, with whom I do not include the inhabitants of towns, because they are out of the question in a discussion on Keller, but country people and the dwellers in small villages,—we find that in Switzerland, as in other parts of Europe, we need only to probe to the hidden depths of human nature to discover outstanding personalities in women, even amongst those living in the plainest and least artificial surroundings.

This is easily accounted for by the fact that our facilities for gaining a personal knowledge of one another have greatly increased of late years, and also that our capacity for reading the text of human nature has developed itself both in breadth and depth. Our self-consciousness has become wide awake, our personal needs are more complicated, and our understanding of one another is finer and more flexible than it used to be, while our feelings in general have become more sensitive and we are more easily moved than formerly. What before Keller's time were whole notes with a stop, became with Keller half notes dwelling long on an even tone, and are now an irritating rising and falling of semiquavers which require a finer ear and between which the pauses are fewer. Our notion of health itself has undergone continual changes, and is changing still. With Keller it signifies something symmetrical, something which changes unwillingly and then only to spring back again into what it was at first. It is health in the abstract, something universal and typical and

authentic, but which would not suffice for the present creative characteristic, since we know to how many oscillations, to how much heaviness, discomfort and suffering, even the most vigorous health is subject; moreover, we know that health in other words is really nothing but a certain overplus of vital energy which helps us on to our legs again every time that we succumb. But as for meaning anything absolute, continuous and unbroken, as in the case of animal life—that, although it may have been Keller's meaning, is not health in the sense that we understand it now.

The literature which bases its creations on this interpretation of human nature is now only in its first groping beginnings; the authors whose nerves are as a sensitive, stringed instrument are scarce indeed—there are but one or two.

Keller, who is the most modern writer of the old school, always describes woman as normally healthy, whereas the modern French authors describe her as being always ill; it was they who introduced the great army of *détraquées*, in the same way as the modern Scandinavians continually describe the emancipated woman in her various phases. But, after all, these are only features on the surface of time, opinions without foundation, rays without focus, they are old ways and old methods in new and cheap clothing. Our object is to pursue the outward phenomena to their physiological roots, and to unravel the intricate skeins which have woven themselves out of the

physical qualifications of woman in her conflict with the laws and influences of the surrounding world. For woman, as regards her outward surroundings, is the most dependent creature upon earth, while as regards her natural disposition, she is the most self-willed. A true poet ought to understand this without being told. And as it happens the poets have all written a verse upon it and have altered the text to make it suit; this they have done out of a manly love of theorising —with or without experience of life. But the modern French writers, like the modern Scandinavians, looked chiefly into their own little corner of the world and studied the little extract of life against which it was their luck to run their noses. It was an author's experience, and nothing more!

Old Gottfried Keller saw considerably further, but then he was not a writer with a purpose.

It was not that he had absorbed himself too deeply in the physiological question, but rather that it shone through everything he wrote. It went with him according to the Biblical saying of the many who run in vain, while the children of Heaven are given it in their sleep. He never racked his brains about it, and with advancing years the gift naturally forsook him also, and when he thought over it in order to make a motive, as with the religious insanity of Ursula, or the hereditary madness of Leu, there was naturally not much scope left for individuality. Yet if he did but glance at a real live woman with thought-

ful and contented eyes, all her physical and intellectual endowments seemed to shine through her. We have only to think of Judith and little Meret, both of whom we have already mentioned, but especially of the woman in the *Seven Legends*. The natural impulses, the instinct which makes a woman of her, the plus or minus of the sensitive faculty and of individual feeling, the marked nobility or peculiar perverseness, each resting on its own physiological foundation, are clearly discernible in every one of Keller's women; let us recall, for instance, the gentle approach of old-maid-dom in the intellectual and cultivated Lux (*An Epigram*), the missionary zeal of the anæmic Afra Zigonia in the story of Herr Zwiehahn (*Green Henry*), Frau Litumlei's indolent obsequiousness, and good Frau Amrain's suppression of sexual feeling after her unhappy marriage, etc.

III

Keller preferred to describe women, and he did it with the greatest ease. We can tell by the construction of his sentences how smoothly the work developed under his touch, and how easily everything found its way into its proper place without exertion on his part or any need for serious thought; whereas with his male characters, or those of them at least who were not of a purely superficial nature, it was by no means such an

easy task. The thread knotted and broke where one least expected it, and the texture became unequal and lost its freshness as though it had been woven by hot and trembling fingers. They were a trouble to him, not a pleasure, and when we see Keller turning a sudden somersault in the middle of one of his most serious passages, we may feel assured that he did it, not out of arrogance, but in order to make good his escape. He had one characteristic which must have been as common in ancient times as it is at present, although it may have sprung from a too individual refinement to find room for expression, it was a characteristic which is common enough among young lyric poets whom it generally leads to their downfall, while Keller, because he had just missed being a lyric poet, was able to provide it with a warm and sheltered corner where it might grow in secret. It consisted in that species of love for women which produces great erotic geniuses, where human longing is mingled with a capacity for spiritual affection, the body is permeated by the soul, desire is purified, and spiritual affection itself vibrates with desire. From a condition such as this, with its great expectations and still greater disappointments, the bitterest women-haters may be evolved. But it is rare, or at least it seldom comes into the light of day, and in the case of Gottfried Keller it was probably only a latent characteristic. It was there none the less. We can distinguish it

in *Green Henry*, the story of his own youth, in the strange way by which he is attracted by woman and longs to be near her and to breathe her atmosphere, while at the same time he is filled with mistrust for the only woman who loves him passionately, as Judith does. He is afraid of wasting his abundance on a desert soil which gives him nothing in return, he has an instinctive misgiving that he must become inseparable from the one with whom he is united, a foreboding that he is one of love's elect — a susceptible stringed instrument, a being with sensitive nerves which awake the impulse and then hold him back. In the second edition of *Green Henry*, which was published in Keller's old age, he added the end of the story of Judith, which describes his personal manner of giving and receiving love. It was this love, which was not continued long enough for him to weary of it, to which he owed his unequalled comprehension of women. His need of woman made her the continual subject of his dreams and caused his fancies to take shape whenever he wrote of her. It was to this that he owed a very peculiar quality which shows itself in his autobiographical story, *Green Henry*; it lent him that incomparable diagnosis of woman, which, with its purely intuitive grasp of the everlasting variable, would have made of him a woman's doctor of the first rank, if he had not had too much of the poet and the artist in him; while the absence of this same attribute is the cause

of the grossest blunders in the majority of women's doctors, who regard the sensitive woman with a feeling partly of disgust and partly as though she were a comic figure.

It was this also which made him sensitive and harsh with regard to any malformations in woman, enabling him to detect every abnormity. If he came upon any such thing in the act of blossoming, his anger knew no bounds, he would have liked to strip naked the poisonous vermin and to beat it across the country from frontier to frontier, had such punishment been consistent with the laws of our civilisation.

There was one satisfaction, however, which he would not allow himself to be deprived of. He warned the public against the outrages of the woman's rights movement which was then in its infancy, and thus he became the forerunner of his Scandinavian colleague Strindberg.

I have already remarked that there was one special peculiarity in Keller's great romance, *Green Henry*, and I must add that it was one which puzzled me for years. It was the hero's passiveness with regard to women and the insignificant position which he occupied as an active agent. There was no lack of opportunity, for he was obviously one of those young men who possess a strong attraction for the Eves of the opposite sex. Anna tries gently to tempt him, Judith takes him by force, while the forlorn Agnes nearly dies of love for him and silently offers

herself, thereby claiming compensation for her injured soul; the starving sempstress is also willing, and so is little Dorothy of the iron image. But Green Henry is never seen to move. He goes about amongst them like a sleep-walker and appears to have no other sensations than such as are caused by a heavy heart. It was not until long afterwards, when I became acquainted with another erotic writer and had read his writings, that I understood this characteristic feature in all its sincerity.

There are a whole row of erotic writers who belong to what we might call the pseudo-erotic school. They are the conquerors, the "Tannhäusers." They recount their adventures and place them in their true light, and themselves also; they think both of themselves and their listeners. Woman is to them an object, which they possess — the rosebud, which they pluck. They are the vainglorious who boast of love, and whom the multitude run after. The others have positively nothing to say, they feel in silence, they experience in silence, they are sparing of their words because their hearts overflow. They do not magnify their own importance, because for them life is everything, and woman the only object of their interest and their study. Keller was erotic in this sense, and that is why Green Henry is so feebly drawn. His experiences were unconscious ones, but his impressions were a surprise to him and he was

deeply conscious of them. This is the reason why in nearly all writings where love and woman are revealed to man, the man seems to fall into the background.

There is a good deal of the *Sensitiva-amorosa* nature about Keller, though it is still in the bud, and a comparatively green bud too. It is there nevertheless, and it shows itself in *Green Henry*, in *The Governor of Greifensee*, and in other places besides. His longing for love goes forth in search of an object, but his sensitive personality holds him back, afraid lest he should be drawn into an unequal union and made to suffer its painful and destructive results. He is not formed out of the coarse material which recognises itself as the master of the woman, he knows that in love and through loving the woman becomes the mistress of the master, and he shrinks from a stupid, small-minded, unworthy mistress. This is why his novels are full of incessant meetings and partings, and while the parting in *Green Henry* takes place with all the melancholy natural to youth, it becomes quite a cheerful event in the *Governor of Greifensee*, and the lovers separate in one of those half sad, half humorous moods when we congratulate ourselves on having escaped a serious danger. He never pictures a woman more alive, or with a keener observation accompanied by more characteristic details, than when he describes her in just such a humorous situation as this. At no other time does he describe so vividly the in-

tellectual poverty, the emptiness of woman—that emptiness which is so peculiarly feminine, although the exact opposite is the popular opinion, and which proves the absence of any really deep, personal feeling. Woman falls in love with externals, with a pair of large, glowering eyes, a loud voice, an actor, or a clergyman like the earnest Aglaya, and she leaves off loving as soon as she is wooed by a person with more individuality than herself, as, for example, in *The Sensitive Hedge-Sparrow.* Or when it becomes apparent that the man does not come of a sufficiently wealthy and presentable family, for example: *Salome.* Or when, like Leu, she is a refined, truly amiable and intelligent woman, who is led astray by a dubious theory about heredity, thereby forfeiting her own and her lover's happiness.

There is another *Sensitiva-amorosa* trait which is that love makes us sad and melancholy. For those who are real erotic geniuses, love is not a trifle to occupy their spare moments, they cannot leave her at intervals and then follow their professions holding their heads high. No, they cannot hold their heads high, that is just it; love takes them entirely by surprise, she has no mercy and no pity; those who have had other experience may rest content, for evidently they have never known what it is to love. Love pursues her victim like fate, and he sinks beneath her powerful grasp. He wanders in darkness as though it were night, while she is all in all to him, and everything else

is forgotten. This is why Green Henry remains in the Count's castle, under the spell of graceful, cunning little Dorothy, when he ought to have been on his way to the poor mother who was dying of sorrow. He can do nothing unless her eyes rest upon his work, and for this reason he can paint pictures for the Count although he cannot write a letter to his mother. He describes his love for Dorothy in the deep symbol of an iron image which feels like a heavy burden that he bears continually in his heart. But in the midst of this enchantment his inner self struggles for freedom; his sensitive nature is conscious of not having experienced the fervent affection of which it is capable, his love is not sufficiently intense for him to give himself up entirely. This fervent affection for which he seeks, and in which he feels that he can rest without compulsion and without loss to himself, this his sensitive nature finds at last in Judith.

Judith is *the* woman, the apocalypse of woman even for Keller, the embodiment of warm-hearted sympathy. In this woman, of whom he wrote at two different periods of his life, are united all his most fantastic ideas about women, together with all his most personal experiences. She is the most daring revelation of love that German literature, with its strict conventions, possesses. She is considerably older than Green Henry, and Keller is not in the least afraid of saying so. She is a woman in the full bloom of life, who has reached

the age when a strong healthy woman is the most attractive, and Green Henry is eighteen years old. These contrasts, who are mutually attracted to one another, are frequent everywhere except in the literature of Germany. But the cause of this mutual attraction is by no means the most elevated; Judith is a mature, sensuous woman and Green Henry is an immature, sensuous youth. She has lived amongst coarse-grained peasants and is very coarse-grained herself; but when she comes in contact with Henry's more refined and complicated nature, she becomes a thorough woman, *i.e.* plastic material. Judith has none of that innate stupidity which so often causes the woman to maintain her ascendancy over the man, to the destruction of his happiness. At first she is imperious and exacting, but as she sees more of Green Henry she gradually changes into a loving woman, by which I mean a self-subjecting woman, for a woman who loves cannot do otherwise that subject herself. He goes into the world, she goes to America. Keller does not tell us much about her while she is there. Time passes and Green Henry comes home, a *Sensitiva* and poetic nature with whom the world has dealt harshly. His vitality is slackened and he feels depressed. Judith meets him, after having sought for him as one whom love has bewitched, who cannot forget; hers is the love of a strong, whole-hearted woman, smitten in the depths of her nature, willing to cast everything aside if only she may love. Her love has nothing to offer, and she

does not believe that she can make him happy, she only begs in silence to be allowed to remain with him, for he is all she has in the world. She makes no stipulation, she asks for no outward sign, she requires no vindication in the eyes of mankind, he is free to come and go when he will. Green Henry can endure love after this manner, and they love one another.

In the story of little Meret, Keller probes deeper still into the nature of woman. Little Meret is Judith over again in the person of a martyred child; it is Judith's nature in the bud.

In the first volume of *Green Henry*, Keller informs us that he found the story of poor little Meret among the papers of an orthodox pastor in the beginning of the eighteenth century; but according to Bächtold, in *Keller's Letters*, she seems to have been an invention of his own. However this may be, the story of little Meret, the witch-child, is the most valuable contribution towards a study of the psychology of the child-woman that we possess in German literature.

In this story Keller displayed the secret nature of the child-woman in its rarest perfection and vitality, which is a thing that a man can scarcely understand and which no woman likes to talk about. It is one of those revelations which belong only to him who is born a poet in soul and nerves and every fibre of his being, born an unconscious poet, by which I mean an intuitive seer. In this child, tormented to death, is displayed the primeval

trait, the innermost kernel of woman's nature, and the woman of genius in the bud is made visible. Little Meret possesses the one quality, the only one through which woman is more nearly related to nature than man, it is a carefully concealed quality, seen only by the few, but which for ever shuts out the woman from outward conformity with the man, and which is the key to her most secret, most mysterious witchcraft—her wildness. The best and the worst women are not docile and tameable, they are not capable of being cultivated and civilised like man—such are only women of middling quality—they are ungovernable, irreverent, full of instinct, nothing but feminine instinct. Whence should come the regeneration of humanity, unless it be from the unused sources of nature, the source of woman's unconscious glory? Whence should proceed the mysterious power of loving, with love's inexplicable dominion over souls, unless it be from the unfathomable, the incomprehensible nature of woman, with her utter disregard for law and justice and all the rest of the intricate building of commonsense upon which human society is founded? Owing to her physiological structure woman is a creature of instinct, and this instinct is her most precious possession, the heritage which she bequeaths to future generations; it is always the same instinct, whether it reveals itself in an evil race of feminine malefactors such as Strindberg's women, or in the richly gifted specimens of Keller's apocalypse of woman: Judith

and little Meret. They are not to be forced in either case! They are all children of nature.

Judith finds the man to whom it is natural to submit herself of her own free will. Little Meret is hunted to death because she refuses to submit herself to a stupid and ignorant training, and one morning they find her lying naked and dead in the garden. She preferred to freeze to death there than to live indoors, in a hideous, unbecoming, penitential dress. Here we have the genius of the child-woman to whom her sense of beauty and the consciousness of her power to charm is her one and only possession. Here lies the true genius of woman; all her intellectual powers and all her strivings after outward emancipation are unnatural invasions into the territory of man.

Keller kept a sharp and malicious eye fixed on what we might call the hybrid type of humanity. For him it possessed the attraction of a repulsive object, and he would not let it escape him. As a man who was born sensitive and erotic, to whom woman was a necessity and a delight, he held all such in abhorrence. The same instinct which enabled him to describe little Meret, that nervous child of the Renaissance, gave him the power to understand those abnormities of whose true nature the clever men of our time are so ignorant that they do their utmost to encourage them. It is true that social problems were far simpler in Keller's day, he for instance knew nothing of the daily bread question, and when he saw any trace

of it, he laughed it to scorn, as in the case of the wretched inhabitants of Seldwyler, who trained their daughters as governesses and companions, and then cheated the poor creatures out of the hard-earned savings which they had received in return for their squandered lives.

But the times when Keller attacked these women in solemn earnest was when they brought their intellectual or artistic pretensions before his notice. In the story of poor Regina there is a lady artist who is a manlike, priggish creature, only there to be the misfortune of others. Keller in his indignation has not spared the trouble to describe her character with many carefully studied details. She is the woman with a profession who "no longer wants man."

In another passage, in the *Seven Legends*, he describes the learned woman who does not wish to have any dealings with men, who despises love, and makes copy out of her male companions.

She ends by becoming a monk and abbot in a monastery. But one day "she felt with a bitter sorrow that she was thrust out from a more beautiful world," and if she, after having arrived at this understanding, did not share the same fate as Strindberg's *Miss Julia*, she had only to thank the nobler character of the man whom she chanced to meet.

Keller speculated a great deal upon these hybrid beings. Not only on the turning of women into men by manly occupations, of which England and

Scandinavia have provided numerous instances during the last quarter of the present century, but he also touched upon a more profound, and as yet scarcely explored territory, the stages of transition between man and woman and the combination of the two characters in the same person. The anecdote of the Emperor Nero, who dressed himself like a woman, and insisted that he was going to have a child, gave him a great deal to think about. His poetic insight extended over the whole territory of organic phenomena, and his instinct was too true to dismiss that which might have a physical explanation with less thought than that which was a purely mental trouble. In those most precious pearls, his *Seven Legends*, the relation of the sexes is the foundation for every single story. Every time it is a woman with a perverted soul, one who in consequence of some inward or outward influence has relinquished her feminine nature. A woman may err as much as she likes, provided she does it naturally, but should she act contrary to her nature as a woman, Keller will never forgive her. In every legend he introduces a Bible or Church tenet to which he gives a profane interpretation.

In this mischievous little book the Holy Virgin, contrary to all traditions, comes to the fore as an enthusiastic matchmaker, and disdains no means whereby she may bring together two silly people who do not know how to manage the matter for themselves. A pious monk is alienated from the.

Church by a little girl who is desirous of marrying him. An hysterical saint makes a love-lorn youth as hysterical as herself; and even the muses go astray in Paradise and behave in such a manner that the Holy Trinity is obliged to silence them by a loud clap of thunder.

In the midst of these distorted elements, the history of the nun "who went out of the convent to quiet her longing" is great and strong as the everlasting evangel of the fulfilment of human love. In these stories we have human love itself in a plain but mighty symbol—spring with its storms bursting its obtruding bonds, summer with its hot raptures, autumn with its fruits, and winter with its calm.

Paul Heyse and the Incommensurable

I

WARMTH, sunshine, peace, and a soft, fresh wind. The blunt peaks of the Bavarian mountains appear above the horizon with their hollows full of snow, the pale blue lake glistens with streaks of silver in the midday sun, and a soft, blue mist obscures the distant view. There is a gentle, monotonous sound of murmuring wind, the first flies of the year are buzzing on the window pane, and the buds on the trees are bursting their scales. The meadows are sparsely clothed in green and speckled yellow and white with cowslips and anemones. Everything is so still, so still that you can hear your own pulse beat, but presently you hear it no more—you are lifted up into the Infinite.

Still, quite still, a half-wakened, susceptible murmuring within, the soul enjoying its siesta and the mind at rest—such should be your mood ere you immerse yourself in Paul Heyse. You do not read him, you do not need to think about him, yet your pulse beats faster and your lungs breathe the pure air of the silent mountains, while somewhere in the distance you catch a murmuring sound as of the loud tumultuous world; or is it only the torrent that flows behind the house?

Paul Heyse's best writings are only for those who are quite young or for those who are quite mature, for those who are still dreaming innocent dreams on the threshold of life, or for those who have dived down and emerged again from the dusty, gasping tumult, and who stand on one side, not wishing to enter again upon the "Steeplechase for life."

This accounts for his unpopularity at the present time.

Outwardly he belongs to an older period which has long ceased to be, but inwardly he belongs to a new period which has not yet begun. He stands before the young people of our time as a classic and an Epigoni, a polished and well-preserved gentleman who contrasts unfavourably with their unbrushed coats, weak spines and sickly faces; he stands before them as an old gentleman who has gained an easy victory, whereas they are panting neurotics ruining themselves in the struggle after renown and the new culture, who grudge him his intuition and despise his old-fashioned methods.

There is a peculiarity about Paul Heyse which consists in its being almost impossible to remember his writings, there is so little material substance in them, they are not at all attractive at first, and virtue is seen too seldom to sit at table with him after crime has expended itself.

But we will now leave virtue for the residue, it is a moral necessity in which the *juste milieu* between socialists and anarchists is encountered.

Paul Heyse would certainly never have lived to be sixty years of age, and a celebrated author into the bargain, if he had not made some concessions to respectable principles; but the manner in which he did it is very unsatisfactory. He does not pant beneath the burden of the moral law, nor does he quarrel with it, he merely avoids it mechanically, as one avoids a bailiff.

His best writings lie on the further side of the ten commandments, middle class decorum and the penal code. They are included in the mysterious province of instinct and impulse, and are sometimes so dreamy that one sees that they are the production of the writer's intuitive nerves rather than the result of serious thinking.

It is this that distinguishes Heyse from the German authors of our day, and because his intuition is so fine, his susceptibility so delicately toned, he is one of the greatest diviners in the province of spiritualised sexuality that has ever been, or now is. And because he was always an intuitive physiologist, he was also a convinced fatalist. He, with his poet's soul, had gazed beyond the accepted standard of good and evil long before Nietzsche, he had recognised the present type of emancipated womanhood long before the Woman's Rights movement was in full swing. It was this delicate sensibility which put him in touch with every secret movement before it had gained ground and become universal, and it is because he possessed this fine suscepti-

bility of the nerves that he became acknowledged as the only one among German authors who knew how to write about love.

Outside the birds are twittering, the torrent roars and the wind of early spring moans around the house, bringing a longing with it, a vague, restless longing for freedom and happiness, a longing to lose one's self and to live one's own life to a degree that is not possible on earth, a longing to shake off everything that holds one down and to be united to the Infinite. . . .

It is the yearning of first youth, which returns again with passionate tears in last youth . . . it is the yearning peculiar to Heyse, the longing of the awakened child-girl and the sorrowful desire of the matured woman, these are the two types of womanhood which he has divined as no one else has done, these are the two passionate ages, the beginning and the end, between which lies the much-trodden, phlegmatic middle path.

Woman is a revelation only in her youth and in her age, in her first blossoming and in the years when she begins to fade; all that lies between is merely education, common sense, discretion and that luke-warm temperament in which the majority of bourgeois marriages are contracted.

II

If we are matured women, we read Heyse as those who know; if we are child-women, we read

him as a guide. Heyse is not one of those who convey strong impressions to feed the hunger of impatient youth; the external events, the comings and goings of his heroes and heroines, and their names and destinies do not remain long in the memory. What does remain is an emotional feeling, something that words are powerless to describe, but which returns as often as we read him. And the day comes when an event in our lives causes it to return again with more force than before, and with advancing years it begins to personify womanly nature and to weigh good and evil according to an unknown standard; later on there comes again another day when this emotion comes forth from the unknown and reveals itself to consciousness, not to the consciousness of the mind, and not exactly to the consciousness of the soul, but to a corporeal consciousness, strange as it may sound. The time has now come when this consciousness must rule woman's most private life in accordance with laws which do not appear in connection with the outer world, with impressions which custom has never foreseen, and with sensations of attraction and repulsion which no longer make themselves feebly felt as of old. Woman has become conscious of her own personality, she has become manifest to herself, she has attained the consciousness of her own nobility, she has discovered a foundation for the expression of her desire to love and be loved. This basis of the relations between man and woman

is not an outward form, it is a physical condition, it is a sensitive expression of being, it is the greatness of the soul.

Paul Heyse is the only German author who has made this greatness of the soul in erotic matters the chief point in his philosophy of life, and he is the only one who has revealed it as the point of sensibility in the relations between man and woman.

It was owing to the fact that he introduced this characteristic into literature and into the consciousness of the period, thereby making it the foundation of an entire literature, that he became something more than a German author. He became a world-wide celebrity, one of the few through whom a new step in sensations has found expression, and through whom humanity has achieved a marked progress on the road to culture. I will not speak of all that Heyse has been to the best women. I will not speak of all that it signified to these women, when, on their spiritual and physical awakening in this world of barren conventions, they were met by a man who, with one stroke of the magic wand of his intuitive faculty for divining, awoke the hot spring which is woman's one and only possession, the source of her genius and of her whole character, her spiritualised, harmonised sexuality. Where and in what other nation has there ever been a writer who awoke this spring? Not even the susceptible Paul Bourget, who has been feeling after it for so long, not even he found it, not one of the Englishmen and Englishwomen

who write so philosophically, humorously and sensibly, not even they discovered it, not even the otherwise so tender-hearted Dickens ever had the slightest suspicion of it. And as far as the Scandinavians are concerned—with one single exception—the Danes are the only ones who deserve any attention with regard to erotics, and even in the midst of their refined, purified tenderness, there is a cold spot, something which resembles a damp fog in the innermost heart of their susceptibility; for them love is always more or less of an artificial matter, an æsthetic satisfaction, a satisfaction or enjoyment which is self-analytical. But in Paul Heyse the nature of passion remains dark as the night in which one loves, unreflected as all spontaneous impulses, unconscious as the love in German folk-songs. Think of the tale of *Laurence and Laura* which sounds like some primeval melody issuing from the soul of the German people. It contains nothing transcendental, for while we would speak of it with all tender respect, we must own that it is the expression of an entirely sensuous yearning. At a certain period of his authorship Heyse's writings were as simple as these half-forgotten folk-songs; he explained, from the point of view of a noble nature, that eternal schism betwixt body and soul which has ever been the favourite subject of coarser writers, he has explained it as a peaceful, boundless and unconscious emotion whereby a person is transported into the love which has

neither beginning nor end, every phase of which and every form of expression—the purely spiritual as well as the purely physical—is equally sweet, equally refreshing, and is always the same breath of life which cannot be explained and cannot be imparted. The self-surrender is complete and unhesitating, because spiritual passion does not end with the physical purpose; the soul which exists only in the other is humble, as all that is noble must ever be in the presence of the Incommensurable—which is Love.

Love is the Incommensurable; who has ever said that before, who has ever felt it? In the early folk-songs it has been both said and felt, and Goethe has declared it in the loving and playful manner of the eighteenth century, but in our youngest literature, and not only in that of Germany, it is scarcely ever either said or felt. In its place we have free love, where they take one another on trial and end by settling down for convenience's sake, after the third or fourth attempt. It is a practical and plebeian method, worthy of the age, but it is not love. What stolid minds and dense souls must they have who need first to take one another on trial! For these thick-skinned ones love is an intellectual partnership, or a partnership of interests; maybe they are two libertines who have come across one another in their search for satisfaction. Of course these forms are the most frequent, but they lie on the boundary between barbarism and decadence

and are constantly losing their balance on one side or the other.

The love which Paul Heyse saw and described is vitality itself. With him love is the essence of vitality, and as the entire philosophy of life is based on that which one feels to be the spark of vitality, so love is the central point in his philosophy. He always describes love as an extraordinary revelation of accumulated strength and power. Love does not hesitate, does not lead astray, does not diminish; as soon as love appears she makes straight for the beloved object whose presence she discerns amongst thousands the instant that he enters the circle of her atmosphere. No sooner does she find herself in the presence of the beloved, to whom she is thus sympathetically attracted, than she becomes the victim of a peculiar emotion which Heyse has never expressed in words, and which it would be very difficult to describe. It is an ardent yearning, a stretching of oneself like the plant to the sun, silent and not to be averted; all the activities of life concentrate themselves towards this one object, the attainment of which means a hitherto unknown force, while the reverse would mean decay. There is no alternative, it must be either an indescribable salvation, or else extinction. To be susceptible of this kind of love and, with the certainty of one who walks in his sleep, to discover the beloved as the one who is organically sympathetic amid thousands whom we either dislike or who are

indifferent to us—is the sure sign of a very high culture and of a rare physical and spiritual purity. Just as the instincts of natural selection are being continually perfected together with more sensitive nerves and soul vibrations, just as the spiritual and sensuous needs attain a higher degree of intensity and importance in measure as they are purified and rendered more personal, so in like manner the unhesitating precision of the instinct of selection, which is the latest quality attained, is the first which the approach of degeneration causes to disappear. In the contemporary literature of Russia, France, and Scandinavia we possess a whole row of extraordinarily good, analytical sketches of these degenerates. The majority of the principal characters in these exquisite psychological studies are no longer able to love, and Paul Bourget has introduced a peculiar type to which these belong. Or else they are not yet able to love for want of spiritual and physical culture—Garborg and Strindberg have made these their special study. On the one side we have degeneration, on the other barbarism, and sometimes a mixture of both. Heyse is the only writer who has described the capacity and necessity for loving which are the organic conditions of love; but as he is not an analyst, and perhaps only an unconscious psychologist, he is not able to tell us why it is that his creations are so permeated with ardent love that his best characters are nothing else but love intensified and personified.

Does he really not know it? Or is it that he will not tell us? Perhaps it does not suit the technical method upon which his talent is formed. Deep though the analytical powers of our modern psychologists are, their human perception is shallow in the extreme. With him there is no analysis, but his perception is clear as truth itself. Our best modern Europeans have not yet got beyond realising the fact that love is a necessity which it is more or less difficult to satisfy; he leaves the necessity on one side as being too obvious to need exemplifying. He does not concern himself as to whether or not it is there, he asks how it can be satisfied, satisfied in that choice manner which a refined and spiritualised sensibility requires. From this point of view he is the most modern of modern writers, and for him love becomes the Incommensurable.

The question is now no longer whether it is or is not possible to live happily together, but whether the one finds that other with whom marriage means rapture and bliss. The union of souls must be complete, otherwise separation will ensue. These are the requirements of the highest culture, and of persons who are possessed of a truly noble personality.

Heyse never wearied of describing this noble personality from every possible point of view, and every time he did it with more or less success. He described it in the early dawn of day when the awakening senses are shy and reserved in the

presence of the strange mystical power which shall decide their fate. He has described it in the quiet, fatalistic waiting for the great revelation of life which may come, or may perhaps never come, since it is not in the power of man to force it. He has described it in that inner self-destruction when the soul, through its own fault or that of another, tarnishes its proud righteousness and can no longer be a law unto itself. He has described it in the evening glow, by which it lets itself be illuminated and consumed. And all these characters have the greatest self-sufficiency combined with the immutable conviction of their dependence on fate. There is a peaceful feeling about them all, a peace which results from the consciousness of a great, universal destiny; and there is a certain self-esteem about them too which comes from the knowledge that they are free from all outer circumstances, from all silly, trivial, commonplace bonds and conventions in the great hour of Eros. People have tried to see the Epigoni in Heyse, who, according to the old receipt, raised his people above their natural circumstances, and let them grow beyond their natural size. But I think they are mistaken. I would sooner believe that the studies in erotics which we have hitherto possessed, excellent and circumstantial though they be, are utterly worthless as regards their psychology. It depends on the writer, not on the things themselves. And I believe that Paul Heyse's way of letting his people

evolve out of a state of dependence—just as the kernel drops from the shell—shews a peculiarly deep psychology productive of a rich future. In my opinion psychology is now only in its first rude beginnings, and the deeper laws of the psycho-physiological life only casually appear above the surface as though by guesswork.

III

Generally speaking the best people are excessively reserved in their relations to one another, even when they are living under favourable conditions and are themselves highly cultured. Our likes and dislikes, our finest, most private and tender emotions are suppressed beneath the threshold of consciousness, while the greater part of what we do, feel, and think is not in the least natural, and is not at all the true expression of our nature. What I mean is that up till now there has only been a single point where we are able to break through that which we call our life, because it is only on this one central point that our real nature bursts through the numbness and coolness of the outer world. That is the apocalypse of love. But it is not at all to be despaired of, that with a more universal refining of mankind, this possibility may also be realised on other and more prominent points.

I think that Heyse's way of expressing it is not

at all idealistic or unreal. How many of love's suicides has he not verified! How many of love's suicides, of whom we read in the papers, have not afforded ample proof to the psychologists of that which Heyse's more sceptical critics have accused as being a trick of the imagination. We read in hundreds of clever and stupid books of how Hans and Grete fight each other, but we never read of how Hans and Grete live the secrets of a happy love; we never read of life's happy ones.

Why? Because it requires a far subtler and more delicate psychological touch to describe it. Even Heyse has not described it; even he has not given us a modern picture filled with the rich tones of life's fleeting moments, with the magic of the varying lights upon it, such as an artist catches when he paints a landscape. He has always been content to make quite a plain little pencil drawing, in which the distinguishing features are only faintly outlined. The great service which he rendered was that he called attention to their existence.

In these little drawings we discern the psychological, fundamental law which has been almost forgotten amid the little world that surrounds us with its secondary laws; it is namely this: That in every particular individual there is a central point which, when set in motion, towers high above its surroundings, while as a natural consequence everything assumes a new aspect. The result of this aspect is that everything becomes of secondary

importance if it has no connection with the one central point. This central point is the finer need of love, which no longer knows anything but itself when once a sympathetic presence has awakened it to its full strength.

We have now reached the second psychological consideration. Does a like sympathetic effect proceed from the one influenced? We are not asking whether the influence is more or less intense, but whether the effect is sufficiently powerful to raise the other tower-high above everything in view of new aspects? Because a refined instinct of natural selection must be able to alight on an equally high temperature, must be as unconditionally selected as it itself selects. Everything depends on this—the affirmation or negation of life—a compromise is impossible! How often, as in *Memorable Words*, Paul Heyse has underlined those seemingly insignificant details like a tone of the voice, a smile, a difference of opinion or a trivial expression which suddenly, no one knows how, acts as a stop to the current of sympathy which had just begun. The one frees himself, but the other is no longer able to do so, and the impulse of his heart overflows into chaos. Therefore love is the Incommensurable. Love cannot be acquired, cannot be earned, cannot be obtained by artifice, and it cannot be dispensed with. Paul Heyse describes how some noble-minded men and women remain alone, not from obtuseness of the instinct of natural selection,

but from refinement, because they could not find all they wanted.

The third psychological consideration, and the sum of his entire philosophy of life, is his fatalism. That of itself would be sufficient to place Heyse apart, in these times when the ruling standard is that of the multitude. He has the proud submission of a profound insight which knows that, in the final instance and in the highest matters, we have nothing in our own power. That which we most earnestly desire comes, or it comes not, but we cannot do anything one way or the other. It is true that there is in us a mysterious impulse, as dark and unknown to ourselves as life itself, which drives us on to where our personal happiness is to be found, draws us into the Unknown and entices us until we are led towards that which is ours in life. But we know nothing of it at the time, and not in every one does it attain to development.

IV

These three fundamental principles form the standpoint from whence Heyse regarded humanity. Humanity, did I say? I mean women, for he is essentially their author. He has been accused of writing for women only and not for men, and it is said that he cannot describe the latter. But with regard to that I should like to point out that he has been the teacher and model of some of the

best Scandinavian writers, and the only model which they found in Germany. The construction of his novels and the grace of his diction won him several followers in young Denmark, where his influence is clearly discernible, but in Germany he had no followers, for he is altogether inimitable; thus he remained alone in his home on the mountain of culture where, although he was much admired and much enjoyed, he was as a tower without access to the critical understanding and to the authors who succeeded him. As for the accusation of his being unable to describe men, the reason is probably this, that in comparison with the depth and directness of his comprehension of women, his men appear commonplace and uninteresting.

They nearly all seem a mere secondary consideration, and to exist only as the indispensable background and emotional force for woman. This gives one the impression that Heyse is not interested in man as a whole, but only in that side of him whereby his peculiar sensibility is brought into contact with woman, and through which his entire nervous system is set in motion. Paul Heyse's man is seldom the one who makes the choice; it is nearly always the woman who gives the first impulse. The man usually remains long in a state of stupid wonderment, understanding nothing, while the woman who loves him has great difficulty in making herself understood.

This is an extremely delicate psychological

feature. For man the choice is not the matter of chief importance, but for woman it is. A man, however refined and cultured, could be quite happy with twenty or thirty women who were entirely different from one another, and he could feel himself warmly attracted by any one of them without his strongest emotions being stirred or his whole existence responding; but for a woman the absolute in love is the greatest, the only great event in her life. For this reason the superior woman will always be the chooser, she will always realise what the man is to her long before he knows it; her silent love will always be the first attraction and will bind him as it were with a thousand invisible cords, while the strange atmosphere which proceeds from her will wrap him round like the tremulous mist on a hot summer's noon. Yet at first he does not, except under the most propitious circumstances, understand that this woman is sympathetic to him, but when the secret workings of organic attraction have completed themselves, he suddenly awakes to find that he is surrounded by a great and ardent love. In those rare cases when a man loves with the whole passion of his nature, and when his love is not, as it is oftenest described, and in our time of cultured barbarism too often is, a perverseness—*i.e.* love for a woman who has frequently experienced love already—in those rare cases it is always the woman who gives the first impulse, and in Heyse's writings it is invariably the woman. In order to awake a deep,

lasting and spiritual emotion in man, a woman needs more than mere physical attraction, she needs a spiritualised womanliness with all the enduring charm of its indestructible intensity. The Incommensurable in love is not a primeval quality in man as it is in woman; a man may have great nobility of soul and yet be able to exist without it, whereas a woman cannot. For her it is the primal condition of her being; for him it is an unexpected, charmed light, illumining his whole existence.

The Author in a Cul-de-sac

Henrik Ibsen

THE artists and authors of our day have one peculiarity in common, which is that they, with one or two exceptions, have no idea of perspective either with regard to the future or the past. Their perspective in the past is shown by Ebers among the Pyramids, and Alma Tadema among the broken pots of Mycenæ. Their perspective in the future is an outlook into a cul-de-sac. The majority of authors in the latter half of this century have conducted their readers by a more or less roundabout path into a cul-de-sac, where they have left them; it has occurred so often that the reading public have begun to lose patience. This fondness for cul-de-sacs is clearly perceived in the drama of our time.

We will not concern ourselves with the lesser playwrights, for the utmost that they can do is to follow the example of their masters and parody them by their imitation. We will turn instead to one of the masters themselves, to one who is justly considered a great dramatist — Henrik Ibsen.

If we examine his entire life-work, piece by

piece, we shall arrive at the conclusion that it was a persistent wandering out of one cul-de-sac into the other.

It began with *Love's Comedy*: Marriage is synonymous with stupefaction, not to marry is synonymous with theorising; remains the missing x, the satisfaction of the sexual instinct; result: cul-de-sac.

It is continued in *Per Gynt*: Romantic imagination is synonymous with self-deception; school of life is synonymous with apathy; the missing x is synonymous with the result: cul-de-sac.

In *Brand* the diagram is simpler: Excessive desire for moral perfection contra absolute religious indifference; result: cul-de-sac.

Whoever reads carefully these three great speculative works of Ibsen's will be astonished to find that it was by no means unconsciously that he ran into these cul-de-sacs; on the contrary, he steered straight for them, and the last sentences of *Brand* read like a triumphal epigram.

But by this time the floor of universal speculation had become too hot for him, and he trod it no more. He turned to a more comprehensible genre—if one may so call the popular discussions on social morals and society problems.

Here it seemed that the author and the thinker might wander arm in arm towards a clearly perceptible goal. How far he attained is a question which we will leave for the next chapter.

I

Above my table hangs an old engraving after the portrait of a woman by the younger Holbein in the gallery at Windsor. It is a face of the Hedda Gabler type—Hedda Gabler three hundred years ago. Fair as a lily, dressed after the newest fashion of her day with a half aureole on her head, puffed sleeves and a high collar, everything fashionably squeezed and tight-laced, and added to this an inscrutable face with cold, veiled eyes, and a small mouth which promises nothing good. She is undoubtedly a well-bred lady of good family, who is not likely to relax her features or change her deportment, but who might possibly allow others to make advances to her. She looks so conscious of her innocence and so demurely attractive, that one thinks that she also may have had an Eckert Lövborg to initiate her theoretically into the lives of young men.

Hedda Gabler is a lady who belongs to the higher middle class, and so carefully has Ibsen analysed her that every one devoted to the study of natural phenomena and class-distinction may, with the help of some preliminary knowledge, study and probe her nature down to the secret structure of her soul. As one well versed in life and anxious to divert attention from the track which he was pursuing, Ibsen declared that this time it was only a psychological study, with

no criticism of society and no wrathful pessimism. And so, dear society, good and bad, you may set yourself at rest!

But society was not at rest. This Hedda Gabler was a creature who displeased it. Nearly all women objected to her and declined to entertain such a moral monster at their tea-table, while all women-worshippers felt that through her the whole sex had been wronged, and finally the majority of men were opposed to her because they were not able to discover any traces of either manly or womanly psychology.

This was not only the case in Germany, and in England which is the home of emancipated women and the birthplace of moral zeal, but even in the author's own Scandinavia they fought shy of her. The priests listened—they who guarded the sacred fire on the altars of the great mystery. "What is this?" they asked. "Is he beginning to speak with tongues?" And the chaste priestesses of the pure Ibsen cult maintained an ominous silence. Everywhere stillness ensued—the stillness of the storm when it rains hailstones.

Another author would have been made to suffer for it; but the great name of the great moralist held hands and tongues at bay.

Amongst us it was murmured that the wise augur had not been quite as happy on this occasion. The strings of the dramatic puppet-show were a little more visible than usual, and the two pistol shots fired in the midst of a phleg-

matic bourgeois *milieu* put an end to all illusion. Then the different degrees of beauty in the death-scenes! Life with or without vine-leaves in the hair!—Where, in the name of wonder, do people speak like that, and where in the upper or lower world do they feel like it?

You, most honoured master, you should carry away the scaffolding and lay aside your tools as soon as the house is finished.

Yet the story is not easily disposed of! There is something hidden away which is not expressed in words, though it sometimes beats and palpitates like an injured nerve, and if anyone were to succeed in touching it, he would hold the secret in his hand. But with Ibsen we never know whether or not we are really touching the central nerve, perhaps because the nerve is not a true vibration of the soul with which the author's entire ego is in sympathy, but only a thought palpitating in the brain which owes its origin to other causes.

The point in Hedda Gabler on which the whole piece turns is mainly this: the dissection of an ideal.

In *Nora*, Ibsen gives us the ideal of the modern woman; in *Hedda Gabler* he dissects it. All that lies between is the slow, laborious work of digging. The miner[1] climbs down into the depths where he digs and hammers in the dark. No daylight reaches him there, he does not know what he is looking for, and he does not know what he finds.

[1] See Ibsen's Poems.

Are they diamonds or coals? In the darkness of the pit the "oppressed woman" meets him, he takes hold of her and believes that he has raised a treasure and discovered the diamond. But when he begins to cut it, he thinks that it is only rock-crystal, and when he examines it more carefully, he sees that he is holding in his hand a piece of coal.

Nora is the rough diamond, *The Lady from the Sea* is the rock-crystal, *Hedda Gabler* is a piece of coal, and a bad kind of coal too.

How did Henrik Ibsen, "le célèbre bas-bleuiste," as an equally celebrated fellow-countryman called him, become a misogynist *à la* Strindberg?

"Man created woman — out of what?" says Nietzsche. "Out of a rib of his god, the Ideal."

It seems to me that this one little sentence contains the concentrated essence of everything that has ever been said, thought, felt and sung by man about woman.

All his vanities and all his wants, from the tenderest melodies of his soul to the most brutal demands of his senses, all his capabilities and his incapabilities, his entire cleverness and his entire stupidity, all these man has immortalised in his songs on woman.

Woman was silent. Or if she made herself heard there was not much sense in what she said. In olden times there occasionally arose a chirping sound like that of a little bird; in later times— in the times of the celebrated writers, George

Sand, George Eliot, Fru Edgren-Leffler, etc.—they moralised on the subject of man. But as the sex of modern authoresses shows a certain natural disposition to attire itself in knickerbockers, one really cannot place them under the heading of "women," they seem rather to belong to a state of transition.

The woman who is completely a woman has never betrayed herself, has never told tales out of school; and why? Because she was not so stupid. She loved and made herself loved to the best of her ability, she hated and teased, and that was an art she understood right well; while the happy or unhappy object of her attentions wrote and sang poems about her, rejoiced and suffered, wrote and sang poems. . . .

Everything that man has written about woman is merely the description of woman such as he imagines her, it is the expression of what man expects of her, seeks for in her, asks of her, and finds or does not find in her. It is a reflection of the varying play of man's soul throughout all ages.

Every man, every nation, every age has created its own particular type of woman.

The superficial and excitable temperament of the French during the century has produced variations of the type of contriving, vivacious little coquettes; the two great German authors, Goethe and Keller, created the thoughtless, sensuous child of nature; John Bull has so

conscientiously simplified himself since the Renaissance that he is no longer able to create any type of human womanhood, his women are elves and Medusas; and as for the women in the new Scandinavian literature, with the exception of Strindberg's hyenas and Ibsen's "thinking women," they can hardly be said to occupy a very prominent position.

Strindberg's fates are ghastly vampires who suck the blood of horror-stricken man. They are not to be described in words, it would require the art of a great painter to represent them as they appear in all the unreal reality of their being.—There still remains Ibsen's woman.

Ibsen's woman holds her sway throughout Europe, and that is in itself a sufficient reason for us to study her as she is represented in his works, and as she stands before us in real life.

II

"Hedda Gabler," Ellida (*The Lady from the Sea*), Rebecca (*Rosmersholm*), Gina, Hedvig (*The Wild Duck*), Fru Alving (*Ghosts*), Nora (*The Doll's House*), Petra (*An Enemy of the People*), Selma (*The League of Youth*), Lona (*The Pillars of Society*), Solveig (*Per Gynt*), Agnes (*Brand*), Swanhild (*Love's Comedy*)—here are the women whom Ibsen has created, since he became Ibsen, the seeker, the analyser, the doubter.

Their first and universal characteristic is that they are all misunderstood.

Their second and equally universal characteristic is that they are either unmarried or else unhappily married, the result in either case being discontent; *ergo* we have the thinking woman, the reading woman, the self-cultured woman, or in other words, the *bourgeoisie* with plenty of spare time on her hands.

Ibsen's earliest period belongs to the traditional historical drama, which owed its origin to Germany; the romantic, lyrical and dramatic poems, *Brand* and *Per Gynt*, thrust themselves between with their contingent of angel-women who acted as deliverers of men; and all his other productions as an author were the result of his criticisms of society, or more correctly, his criticisms of the middle class. He was the bourgeois who rebelled against his surroundings, who raised the scorpion scourge against the flesh of his people and the ideals of his world. In his writings the middle class saw themselves reflected as in a looking-glass.

Each one of his writings contains the dissection of a bourgeois ideal, and it is always through a woman of the bourgeois class that the result is seen.

The first piece in which he condemned society was that bitterest of all parodies that has ever been written on legitimate unions: *Love's Comedy*. Never has the institution of marriage been made to appear more ridiculous, or the basis of bourgeois

society, *i.e.* its respectability, been more unmercifully dissected. At the same time the Ibsen keynote of man's relation to woman, or what is virtually the same thing, woman's relation to man, is already struck, and struck with no uncertain sound. A woman cannot live with a man, with any man; Swanhild loves Falk, but she will not yield herself to him either for to-day or for ever, for fear lest their love should not endure. She marries an old prig instead, and Falk goes away deeply moved and sings a song on eternal youth.

This bourgeois piece is framed on the negation of life itself, and its subject is the unnatural one of a solitary being who desires to stand alone. It is a profound, psycho-physiological moment when sickness has declared itself. Who is to blame? Bourgeois society? The author? Or both?

The Pillars of Society is the glorification of the woman who is able to stand alone—the old maid. There are two old maids in the piece, the one active, the other passive, and both are perfect providences on earth. It was really very pretty of Ibsen to have raised these much-neglected beings to the throne of honour. The principal old maid, Lona, who is an extraordinary specimen of emancipated womanhood, refuses to marry because she has had an unfortunate experience, and she dares not risk her happiness in that most terrible—also most glorious—of all games of chance, but prefers to stand on the shore and play providence. Selma (*The League of Youth*), Petra

(*An Enemy of the People*), Gina, Hedvig (*The Wild Duck*), are four genuine examples of the bourgeois class. Selma—an ornamental little doll, a perfect Nora in the bud—is the poetry of a rich merchant's home, poetry, that is to say, in the sense that the rich merchant understands it; she refuses to be poetry any longer and acquaints her husband with the fact that love and marriage must terminate because he has not "allowed her to take part" in his business troubles. Petra is the wage-earning daughter in an impecunious bourgeois home, a poor neutral creature who has forgotten that she is a woman, and in whom men forget it too. Gina, in Ibsen's deepest piece, is a young lady housekeeper who is allowed to sit at dessert with the boarder, and the anæmic, hysterical, romantic Hedvig is her child; both are genuine portraits and equally genuine negations of womanhood in the heart of woman's being. Finally Nora and Fru Alving, the two great progenitors of the entire race of thinking and reading women. Nora is a double being, in whom the author's observation and reflection grow up side by side like two divided stems; and Fru Alving is Ibsen himself in the disguise of a woman. These pieces one and all describe the liberation of the housewife, the conventional table-cloth on the bourgeois table, the obvious corruption of bourgeois marriages, noble women who would be ruined by their contact with bad men, if it were not that they are the strong women who shake off the weak men,

but who, in consequence of their unnatural behaviour, are changed into neutral beings in their flight before marriage, just as Daphne, in olden time, was changed into a laurel when on her flight before the god.

Hitherto Ibsen's writings have had two sides which are directly opposed to one another: the one negative, pessimistic, direct, which served as so many leaves in the school-book of the *bourgeoisie* as the class of society which is the ruling class, but which is, by reason of its moral bankruptcy, doomed to immediate destruction. The scene of action is always an imaginary one, with a cosmopolitan colouring; it is not Ibsen's fault if, on the Continent, his characters are looked upon as essentially Norwegian, he tried, to the best of his limited power, to render them cosmopolitan. The other side of his writings is quite positive, quite creditable as regards its starting-point and its aim: the glorification of woman as a vessel of good, as a saviour of society, as the conscience of man.

Then came *The Wild Duck*, which contained the most characteristic personalities upon the most ricketty foundation. One wondered what the old man was about.—Gregers Werle, who runs with moral precepts into the dwellings of day-labourers; and the lies of life, which also have their moral significance—it was Ibsen himself who held judgment upon Ibsen. And like a visage, reflected and distorted in muddy water, the figures of Gina and Hedvig glide past like so many poor,

tormented, guilty or guiltless people with no ideals, no moral trumpets.

A couple of years later *Rosmersholm* appeared. It startled the whole circle of flattering women and their flatterers. No more censuring of society, no more glorification of woman! The bourgeois centre no longer takes the first place, it fades into a decorative background; the entire space is absolutely filled by two people, a man and a woman, who are engaged in a battle against one another. The man is a noble creature, weak but refined; the woman is a plebeian by birth and soul, coarse-grained and selfish, one whom nature has designed for a criminal. Here we also have a weak man and a strong woman, but the lights and shadows fall quite differently.

There is one thing which the author throws into the balance in the woman's favour, and that is that the woman is brave and fit for life, while the man is cowardly and unfitted for it.

The next to appear was *The Lady from the Sea.*

People were astonished and asked what it was.

"It is a piece in praise of true marriage," replied Ibsen's women admirers, and they wept.

What of this hysterical Fru Ellida who waits expectantly for some one else, who lives on Platonic terms with her husband and ends by sending her—very grown-up—stepdaughter into an educational establishment? What does Fru Ellida do? She indulges in bold fancies and

exalted dreams, and when the subject of her dreams stands before her, and when the great happiness comes, which is always equally the great danger—she does not recognise him, she is afraid of him, and she takes refuge with her safe and trustworthy spouse, the patient Wangel.

Can't we see Ibsen's eyes twinkling behind his spectacles?

III

One of the first principles, on which Ibsen's glorification of woman rests, is that woman is noble.

Nora is noble, but Rebecca is not.

Another of his principles is that woman is courageous and well fitted for life.

Rebecca is courageous, but Ellida is cowardly.

. . . Let us turn to Hedda Gabler. She is what used, in older days, to be called a "dragon." All that she says and does, all her smiles and her kisses are wicked, she is tormented by a love of mischief, she is filled with an impotent, cowardly greed which incessantly turns to an envious hatred of all things living, extending even to her own offspring.

But she is something more, she is a symbol.

Ibsen has resumed the thread which he allowed to drop since the appearance of *The Wild Duck*. Hedda Gabler is a daughter of the upper middle class, the class whose moral bankruptcy has

afforded a subject for his social dramas. Hedda Gabler has the courage and the soul of the bankrupt daughter of a race of bankrupts, whose only rule of life is a hollow form, and she, in the guise of a woman, represents the unfruitfulness of this exhausted class.

But Hedda Gabler is something more. She is the reverse of Fru Alving. Fru Alving is a good woman destined to be ruined by men, Hedda Gabler is a bad woman by whom men are ruined.

There is yet another point about her. She is the destruction of the "ideal" in woman, the ideal which Ibsen incarnated in woman as the absolutely good, strong, clever, pure, courageous, etc.; in her he repudiates the worship of woman; in her he repudiates the vanguard of women who were armed by himself, the women's rights women and opponents of men; all the deformities of the modern woman are concentrated in Hedda, who hates and rejects her own offspring.

This accounts for the mysterious silence which pervaded the north when the great prophet, "le célèbre bas-bleuiste," began to speak with tongues.

IV

If we glance over the work of Ibsen's life-time, we see that every single ideal of the day which he dealt with in his writings was by him destroyed. First came that absolute faith which was the

fundamental Christian ideal in *Brand*: he destroyed it. Then came the romantic capriciousness of a bourgeois soul in *Per Gynt*: he destroyed that also. In his social dramas he dealt with the conventions of society, and them he also destroyed. Afterwards came woman . . .

Ibsen is not an erotic, and his instinct taught him very little about woman. As woman she has no attractions for him, she is nothing more to him than an idea—a figure in a game of chess. He began to push these figures backwards and forwards. His first women were ghostly dialecticians. He did not know woman sufficiently well to write of her according to his own perceptions, so he modelled her according to recognised literary forms, *i.e.* after the writings of former generations. This was the origin of the glorification of a mother's love (Agnes) in *Brand*, and the glorification of waiting (Solveig) in *Per Gynt*, both of which are creations of undoubted poetical beauty, for Ibsen was a great poet in his youth.

His social dramas were the result of discontent, and he sought for and found the discontented woman. His method of creation is worthy of notice. His men differ, but with his women the course of development is always clearly discernible. In *The League of Youth*, which is one of his earliest pieces, Selma already contains Nora in the bud, while Petra in one of his other dramas resembles a photograph of Lona; Dr Rank afterwards turns into Oswald; Fru Alving has the

temperament which develops into Rebecca and stands in doubt before the possibility of murder, Rebecca commits it, and both without moral compunction. Yet in spite of this, the glorification of woman reached its zenith in Fru Alving, and as formerly its tendency was to increase, so now it began to decrease. Rebecca is followed by the Lady from the Sea, and she in turn by Hedda —lower, ever lower. There is always one special peculiarity, as I have just signified, which Ibsen carries on from one character to the other, and which he either increases or destroys. For instance, Rebecca longs for life and is courageous, while Ellida thirsts for life but is not courageous, and Hedda is not courageous nor does she thirst for life, but is cowardly and inquisitive. In each piece he leaves a little bit of ideality to be dissected in his next work, and the last remnant of the ideal bequeathed by Hedda is "a beautiful death." The Master Builder's death is no longer beautiful.

Thus Ibsen's constructive method is revealed.

Men always write about woman as they imagine her to be and as they desire her, and it is the same when a woman writes, she always pictures herself as man sees her. It is woman's nature to mould herself after a form, and to desire a form in which she can mould herself. But of course this manner of speaking, thinking, acting always is and remains only a superficial form. There is something beneath it which follows other laws and is seldom revealed to the gaze of man. This is perhaps the

reason why Ibsen, though he did not draw his women from nature, was destined in a few years' time to meet his Lonas, Noras, and Rebeccas in real life. The Lonas founded high schools for the advanced education of women, became students themselves and educated others, the Noras became authoresses and produced a redundant literature dealing with morals, and the Rebeccas claimed the right of an unmarried woman of thirty to take possession of the man whom they considered worthy of being made happy.

V

When Ibsen reappeared on the scenes with his *Master Builder*, after an interval during which he had become celebrated, the physiognomy which he presented was one that was quite unexpected. He seems to be in the same predicament as "the old fellow who did not know how to help himself." Everything goes round in a circle, as it did in Solness's head before he fell from the tower. And if it is possible to find any meaning at all in this very obscure piece, it is that Ibsen had a presentiment that he was going to fall down off the height of his dialectic scaffolding, but that he was not able to give up his useless habit of climbing, which, for such an old man, was a very break-neck amusement.

This presentiment has been fulfilled, for in

Little Eyolf he really did fall down and break his leg. And this leg-breaking is quite in keeping with the rest of Ibsen's dramas. It is as naturalistic as it is symbolic, and its foundation is logical.

If we to-day glance back at Ibsen's works, we can borrow the result of his quiet meditation and say: Henrik Ibsen is himself the little Eyolf of the middle class, begotten by the union of the Gallic formula of the rights of humanity with the Teutonic deterioration of race; compare Rita and Almers. And as soon as the parents had accomplished this, they attempted no more; again compare Rita and Almers. Their only achievement was a brain that developed itself in a logical manner.

From the beginning to the end of Ibsen's work the one thing lacking is synthesis. Synthesis is one with personality, and Ibsen is not a personality; he is all brain. He has not, in any one of his books, the warmth and pulsation that belong to a complete nature; one feels something resembling warmth, yes, something very like feverheat, in the passages where he describes cruelty; we need only recall the martyrdom of Agnes in *Brand*. He was a man of brains who composed; but the brain cannot compose. The blood composes, the soul composes, the nerves compose, but of all these he had very little—there was indeed a despairing lack of them in the year 1848 and thereabout. What did that period bring with it?

A wordy warfare in which the logic of Judaism assumed the highest tone. Wherever this logic found its way, it imported debates upon problems, and Ibsen became the greatest of its pupils. He agitated, he "revolutionised," he occasioned more than one act of momentary liberation. There was one characteristic which he retained from the days when he had been an apothecary's apprentice, and that was an affection for acids. His entire authorship comes under the head of acids. He was never a psychologist, only a constructive agent, and since *Rosmersholm* even his constructive power has forsaken him; his men, Wangel, Tesmann, Solness, Almers are only variations of the same Rosmer. His women, Hedda, Hilda, Rita, are obvious derivations from the woman *à la* Strindberg. And now that he is nearing his end, he stands where his own Rita stands, whose last hope it is to make little civilised Eyolf-cripples out of the ragged, unmannerly, yet vigorous fisher class.

The High Priest of Purity

Björnstjerne Björnson

I

I SAW Björnson for the first time in Paris in the spring of 1886, where he formed the centre of the entire Scandinavian population. He was living with his wife and daughters in a quiet side street not far from the Bois de Boulogne, in which he always took his morning walk. When I went to see him, his wife was the first to receive me; she was a dark-eyed native of Bergen, still pretty, with short-cut grey hair, and at first it seemed as though she meant to spend the customary quarter of an hour in conversation with me, as Björnson was at his work and might not be disturbed. Before long, however, the door into the adjoining room was opened, and a powerful, grey, bushy head was thrust through the aperture—a high forehead and little sharp eyes that sparkled behind a pair of spectacles, a large prominent hooked nose, and a pair of thin lips that quivered with anger and energy—but the next instant this menacing totality softened into a winning smile,

and the whole man came in view, it was a bear-like figure, not above medium height, but with shoulders, arms and legs that gave one the impression of immense muscular strength. A man with this body and this temperament would require to lay about him in order to make life endurable, that was the first impression that one received, and the second was that this great muscular man was not created to understand the most subtle and hidden problems of human life. At the same time one understood his popularity. This genius of a bear had something about him that was irresistibly healthy, straightforward and convincing; he represented the primeval type of manhood, the leader whom the mass of the people follow like a flock of sheep, and at whose glance women turn hot and cold. Björnson's is not a reserved nature—with such muscles there is no need of reserve—and owing to his communicativeness one gets to know him as well in a single day as any one else in a year. He invited me to join him in his morning walk in the Bois, and having first divested himself of a colossal Wagner cap, which seemed intended rather for adornment than for warmth, he stepped along with an elegance that would have done credit to a dandy, but which among German authors and thinkers is wholly unknown. The Scandinavians as a rule set a far greater value on dress than the Germans, and Björnson did not conceal his personal feelings in this respect, as displaying the silk lining of his

overcoat, he said: "You see I am fond of fine clothes; when I get a new suit from the tailor, I spend half the day in front of the looking-glass, but for all that I never for a single instant forget the great work of civilisation to which we must devote our whole energy."

We crossed the Place de l'Etoile, and Björnson began to tell me about this same work. He spoke loud, and in a threatening voice, as though he were addressing a large audience. Omnibuses rattled by, light elegant carriages with india-rubber tyres flew past us, and riders came out of the Bois; it was necessary to concentrate one's attention, to make room, to be careful, the crowd of foot-passengers was enough to confuse anybody; but Björnson behaved as though he did not observe it, he had grown excited in speaking, his voice quivered, his eyes shone with tears, and the passers-by stood still and stared at the strange bear-like figure with the broad, ruddy face appearing beneath the cylindriform hat and the brand new suit. But Björnson was too much accustomed to be stared at in his own country to allow himself to be disturbed by it. He shouted a few words of hearty greeting to a sad-looking little fellow countryman whom he caught sight of; and presently an English Bible-seller wandered by, who, hearing a foreign tongue, offered him the Word of God, whereupon Björnson recollected that he did not possess a Bible, and commenced a long altercation with the man, which

ended by Björnson commissioning him to leave one at his house at the earliest opportunity. At last we reached the Bois. We walked among the fragrant acacias to the waterfall and past the winding lake, we walked and walked, surrounded by the spring magic of the half southern landscape, and imbued with the feeling of peaceful melancholy and comfortable exhaustion which the early spring in Paris brings with it. But Björnson felt neither melancholy nor exhaustion. Excited, and aglow with physical energy as though he contained the whole charge of an electric battery in himself, he spoke of the problem of how the relationship between men and women was to be remodelled. His great novel, *Thomas Rendalen*, had appeared not very long before, and he had just finished the first chapter of *In God's Way*. He confessed that until lately he had not understood the importance of the subject, that he had not in fact possessed sufficient physiological knowledge. In all his former writings he had treated the relations between men and women in the old way, as something that is founded on a physical need. But the moderns will not have it so any longer. "No, they will not have it," he said, in a voice that quivered with excitement. "They wish to get beyond that. The best men and the best women have other duties now, they recognise that it is their duty to work hand in hand towards the ennobling of the human race. What they want is a higher union. All the best men and women

are of one opinion in the matter, and the number of the best increases with increasing knowledge. The time will come when it will be natural to every high-minded man and woman to wish only for a spiritual union."

I was dumbfounded. This doctrine did not please me, and proceeding from the lips of this robust giant it sounded, to put it mildly, somewhat strange. Björnson was silent for a few moments, we neither of us spoke. When the pause had elapsed—the pause which his listeners are wont to fill with a volley of applause—he began again in a condescending manner:

"I too used to think differently. In my youth I lived as others do; I knew no better. No one told me. But if I had known then what I know now, I should not have done it. I was in America a few years ago, and there they are further advanced than they are here; I spoke with some American lady doctors, and they explained it to me. They proved it to me on paper as clearly and plainly as possible. Strength goes here or there. In the brain or—in propagation. There is never more than a certain amount of strength, it only depends on where it is localised, whether for the highest purpose or the lowest—they explained it all. There is no 'must' about it, there is no natural necessity; that is deceptive nonsense. But women must make a beginning, they must oppose their degradation. Women must unite with women to give one another a hand. You

must support each other, and then you will be able to dictate to men. The talk about not being able is all nonsense. For instance, you," he said, turning suddenly on me, "have you ever had any difficulty of the kind?"

Of course I assured him that I never had; and I could do so with a good conscience, as he obviously alluded to a very material form.

Björnson took me back with him and gave me a copy of his *Gauntlet* in Fraülein Klingenfeld's German translation, which is a new and more severe edition of his former work. We often saw each other afterwards, but he never made me such a long speech again; I was not the right sounding-board for him. And here I must add, for the enlightenment of my possibly astonished readers, that conversations such as these were quite common at the time when the moral movement was raging in the north.

I happened to be in Copenhagen the following year when Björnson's great moral tournament was announced. He spoke in one of the largest theatres in Copenhagen. Troops of "enlightened" peasants had come from the country to hear him; they looked strangely out of place with their black neckties and short whiskers as they pushed their way through the front seats, between Copenhagen elegants and worthy ladies of ripe years. The whole place was crowded to overflowing. I had a ticket for the evening reception which was given in honour of Björnson by a committee of the

women "progressionists" of Copenhagen who formed the advance-guard of the emancipation movement, and I intended going there when the lecture was over.

Björnson appeared. A desk had been placed on the stage in front of the curtain, which was lowered. He mounted it, and stood looking like a righteous lion with a shaggy, grey mane, his eyes firmly closed, his lips compressed, the very incarnation of fanatical energy, "the man" for the masses. He began to speak. First he thundered, then he lowered his voice; first the words fell like hard stones, then his voice shook with emotion; he commanded, he entreated, he became by turns a man of learning, a pastor, a prophet and a jailor. But the effect produced upon the people of Copenhagen was not great. They applauded him very casually, the Danes—even in the lower stratum of society—are too æsthetic and critical, too conscious of being the possessors of an old and refined culture, to adopt the simple Norwegian modes of thought. Shortly afterwards Björnson visited the provincial towns and sowed his seeds throughout the whole of Scandinavia, where they took root.

I went home after the lecture feeling disappointed and depressed. It had sounded so hollow, and considering the past of this great writer and the future expectations of the three countries respecting him, it seemed to promise little for the hopes which the young generation

had fixed on him and on him only. It made me shudder to think of the speeches in which the representatives of a dozen old maids, and about as many discontented wives, would sing his praises in consequence of his words this day. The lecture, which was called *Monogamy and Polygamy*, was the great divide between his yesterday and his to-morrow; it was then that the words were spoken: "So far and no further."

He had been too crude and too pathetic for the people of Copenhagen. But the further he travelled into outlying districts, where culture was less advanced, the more this crudeness and pathos gained him influence, and as this tournament resulted in a change in the moral conceptions of Scandinavia which was destined to rule over family life as well as public life—a change which assumed the authority of a whole school of contemporary thought of which Björnson was the speaking trumpet, and as this school continues to gain ground in Germany the more surely, the more it becomes conscious of being the expression of the experience of a class, it deserves a more careful investigation.

What then was the subject of Björnson's lecture?

It was a repetition of that speech of his in the Bois de Boulogne, only it was a larger and more detailed generalisation of the same, because in it he no longer dealt with noble-minded men and women, but with all men and all women. He had two fundamental doctrines which he used as his

starting points: Woman's complete equality with man respecting marriage, and the unconditional adaptive capacity of mammals.

Whether the latter doctrine is included in the German version of *Monogamy and Polygamy*, I cannot say, as I have not got it by me. But with the exception of what the American lady doctors had told him, Björnson founded his argument in favour of the reform of the sexual relations on the following anedote: He met a man who had a large cage in which he kept a dog, a cat, a rat, a mouse and a bird. He fed them well and taught them to overcome their natural instincts of enmity and to live peaceably together. "And they all prospered well, very well, and loved one another much, very much." It evidently had not occurred to Björnson that the chief characteristic of this story is the parable of the cage and the domestic animals. It is a well-known fact, that in zoological gardens the ravenous animals are kept apart from the peaceful ones, as the latter are ready to die of fear and misery from the mere smell of the others, even without seeing them. But Björnson places the cage first as a matter of course—the great cage of society filled with domestic animals and house parasites which have been tame for generations, and are indolent and blunted in their instincts. Too satiated, too lazy and too degenerate to fight, the dear little creatures vegetate in close proximity to one another, which is exactly what well-fed domestic animals are in the habit of doing, even

without a cage. And then with a bold logical venture, he compared this state of things to the most central and most complicated of human relationships. If even the unreasoning animals are able to overcome their natural instincts, he argues, man also, after being sensibly reasoned with and encouraged by example, after many generations of training will be capable of adapting his strongest instinct to moral precepts and finally attain the ideal of pure sexlessness. Is not the daughter of the "educated classes" chaste? Have we not many millions of chaste old maids? Then why should not we have chaste old bachelors, and why cannot we have chaste young bachelors as well? Arise, you women! Strike! Refuse to be made "the laundry for unclean men"! Twice before he gave this lecture, Björnson had dealt with the same subject—in *Thomas Rendalen* and in *The Gauntlet*; the last of these two is the best known in Germany. In both works he declares that there should be only one moral standard for men and for women, and that this standard should be that of women.

The supporters of the movement in favour of the emancipation of women in Scandinavia baptised themselves into the name of Björnson, and adopted his confession of faith. The life, temperament, and superfluous energy of man was brought under the horizon of woman, and the eternal active was to allow itself to be remodelled by the eternal passive, because the latter was statistically in the majority.

At the time when Björnson was giving these

lectures and writing these books, there was another movement which had just reached its zenith in the north, and which, by its opponents and by the emancipated daughters of the middle class, was known by the designation of "free love." Its leaders were Arne Garborg and Hans Jaeger, who pleaded for the universal recognition of the socialist ideal as follows: That the conditions of society might be so ordered as to render prostitution unnecessary, by making early unions possible and marriage no longer a sacrament. Both parties were anxious to abolish prostitution, which is an evil that is not mentioned in Germany, although here also the emancipation movement (still in its infancy) is interested in it. It was the aim of Garborg and Jaeger to hasten its destruction by making it economically possible for early unions to be contracted in love, whereas Björnson and the women's rights party sought another means, *i.e.* the mortification of the flesh.

No subject that has ever been discussed in the north has met with such an immense and lasting interest as this one. Beneath the pressure of Björnson the movement for the emancipation of women assumed a form of open enmity against man, and introduced a pietistic doctrine of the superiority of women into the literature and public life of Sweden. Should the movement ever force its way into the outposts of declining militarism in Germany, the signs are already to hand that there also the spirit of Björnson will rule.

How was it possible that this manly author with his impetuous and progressive nature should lose his way in the cul-de-sac of Christian asceticism—in the covert places of degeneration—and that having arrived at the time of life when a man's opinions are matured, he did not find his way out again?

Here we come to the spot where the many conflicting threads of Björnson's life are knotted together, from whence we arrive at the various stages of his creation, and from them find our way back again to the central point of his being.

A piece of contemporary history and class biography is unfolded in these numerous phases of Björnson's life, reaches its climax here, runs its course and finds its ending. The political and social type of the ruling middle class is sharply outlined in him, and clearly stamped as though it were in a bronze medal.

But before we come to this chapter, we must examine the course of his development and the appreciation accorded him by his countrymen.

II

It cannot be said that Björnson meets with an unquestioning recognition in the middle classes. The influence of agitators is always most strongly felt by those who are a little below them in the social scale, that is perhaps the reason why

Björnson has succeeded in exerting such a great influence upon the Scandinavian peasantry and upon women.

A few years ago I was travelling on foot through Norway, aided by the national means of locomotion, the "skyds." It was slow work, but it afforded me numberless opportunities of coming in contact with the sons of the soil. On one occasion I met with a peasant on his way home from the "saeter," who was content to be my guide for hours together, and he gave me some insight into his admiration for Björnson as a political speaker; another time, while I was waiting for horses in a "skyds station," I examined a little book-case which was hanging over the writing table in the superintendent's room, and there I found an almost complete set of Björnson's works. And once it was the "skyds" boy himself who asked me if I knew Björnson. All the women teachers and book-keepers who, with knapsacks on their backs, wander across the mountains of their native land, carry his name upon their lips and his books in their hearts. High up at the foot of Skineggen in Jötunheimen, in the midst of eternal snow, I asked a haggard-looking old Valdres peasant who kept the tourist's house there during the six weeks of summer, which was my nearest way to Björnson, and he answered with an approving smile addressing me in the second person singular: "Thou knowest Björnson, thou art an intelligent young lady. Trust me and I will tell

thee all that thou wouldest know." Whereupon he went indoors and fetched a large map of the Norwegian mountains, which he spread out on the short grass between us, and proceeded to point up and down with his finger into Gudbrandsdal and from thence to the south till he came to a spot where he stopped short, and said: "Here is Aulestad, Björnson's place. Every one who wishes to go there may do so, thou also." Then he began a long complicated account of the why and the wherefore Björnson is beloved by the peasant, said that he was a "homely man" who went "straight ahead"; and then he told me of the difficulties that he and his neighbours had encountered in order to hear him speak, and how they had gone long journeys to attend meetings in distant places.

Far from there, in comfortable Denmark, where the peasants are short and round but none the less zealous readers of newspapers and earnest politicians, I met a certain self-confident Sören Sörensen in a third-class railway coupé who bestowed on me the honouring epithet of "intelligent young lady," because I let him know of my acquaintance with Björnson. Björnson's name was a sure letter of recommendation among the peasantry of the three Scandinavian countries. It is not very long since he spoke in Jutland in favour of arbitration, universal disarm-ment and public peace, and with his usual cunning, called upon his old antagonists, the pastors, to help him in the name of their religion in the great work of

peace. His name had been sufficient to collect around him no less than thirty thousand listeners, even in those years of the apathy and despondency of the Danish people. What is the cause of this immense influence?

I can explain it in two sentences. It is that in him the peasantry recognise their own flesh and blood, and that he stimulates the middle class.

The class distinctions of central Europe have simplified themselves in the north. There is scarcely any social democracy and no great industrial class, their place is occupied by the peasantry as a political power and by the provincial middle class as the rulers in business. Björnson himself was born a peasant, but became a bourgeois in his early youth. In the next generation the sons of peasants who became authors were careful to avoid the middle class. But on the other hand there is annually a by no means inconsiderable percentage of the peasantry who go over into the middle class because it is more highly educated. Among these are pastors, gymnasium teachers, doctors, lawyers, merchants—yes, and rich peasant proprietors as well. The provincial *bourgeoisie* of the north represents what is perhaps the purest type of that decadence of the middle classes which has declared itself throughout the whole of Europe; it is totally unlike the Scandinavian peasantry, which possesses a healthy strength, the reverse of social democracy, and embodies the power of a rising class. The great

European upheaval of 1848 barely touched this Scandinavian *bourgeoisie* with its narrow horizon, its commercial self-satisfaction, its snivelling morality, its mania for conventionalities, its love of stagnation, its small-minded, starved nature and hypocrisy against which Ibsen, the revolutionary bourgeois, has raised the scorpion whip, and Björnson, the peasant's son, has preached in his reform writings, preached against it and its middle class views of life, though at the same time he always looked upon it as the highest normal condition.

Ibsen took Hedda Gabler, the daughter of an officer whom he describes with considerable humour, for the profession of commanding officer in Norway is the favourite resource of the superfluous sons of tradesmen, and it has of late been proved by the autumn manœuvres that the Norwegian peasant soldier can do everything, whereas his commanding officer can accomplish very little. Therefore Ibsen took this daughter of the upper commercial class with her superior morals, analysed her and proved her to be what she was—a sexless nonentity who stupidly sells herself with utter disregard to her future offspring, and who retains nothing of a woman's nature beyond a weak, impotent desire. He takes her and throws her to the dead with an æsthetic formula on her lips—takes her and permeates her entire being with that exhausted vitality which leads to suicidal mania. Björnson takes as his

heroine Svava, the daughter of a rich but very dissipated merchant, who falls in love with a young man while conversing with him on old-maidish and philanthropic topics, but throws her glove into his face in consequence of some back-stair gossip through which she discovers that instead of living like herself, he has acted the part of Don Juan after the example of her father. Björnson contrasts the vulgar frivolity of the male bourgeois with the vulgar sexlessness of the superior girl, and he extols the latter as being the only salutary system of morals.

Of course Björnson's *Gauntlet* was received on the bourgeois stage with great pomp, but not so Ibsen's *Hedda Gabler*. And while the middle class was unanimous in regarding Ibsen with curiosity mingled with horror, as the angel of death whose sign is on his door, it greeted Björnson as a renowned and fashionable physician who is always able to effect a cure so long as the illness is not positively fatal.

The Scandinavian peasant does not let his hair grow grey over these discussions, and in general he is well disposed towards the emancipation of women. He has long been accustomed to see women work and earn wages like himself, for it is not at all unusual for his sisters and aunts to provide for themselves by becoming maid-servants. That the wife should have the right of disposal over her own dowry, should keep a sharp eye on all gains and expenses and should put in a word on all affairs of

house and home—to that also he is well accustomed, and the compliant son of the soil knows how to sing a song in praise of the matriarchy of the peasant mother. Matrimonial infidelity is to him an abomination, he does not envy the townsman that for which he personally has little opportunity, and he despises the attractions of the youthful life of the idle sons of the middle class, since he seldom transgresses with any save his future wife. And since he looks at everything from the utilitarian standpoint, it is natural that he should give his full approval when daughters not only cease to cost money, but are able to earn it and to lay by a store of fine dollars. As for their remaining unmarried —well, you can't have your cake and eat it—they have got the money, what more do they want? The peasant does not look upon married life in the æsthetic manner that is common to the higher classes for whom it possesses a certain artistic value, to him it is as much of a business as milking, ploughing, manuring; and if the one is no longer necessary, the other can be dispensed with too. He has none of the prudery of the townsman who finds something offensive in a bold glance at nature, yet he too has his pruderies, and if the townsman evinces moral and æsthetic scruples against an open discussion or an undiluted song of love, so likewise the peasant will not read it in print because to him it represents the commonplace. This is how Björnson, with his doctrine of perfection, proved to be the right man both for the

middle class and the peasantry; his lectures were acceptable chiefly because they partook of the nature of a religious discourse or a Sunday sermon, to which a man listens when he is wearing his best clothes, but which he has no time to think about during the six remaining days of the week when he is busy and has to do his work.

No sooner had I reached Gudbrandsdal than I seemed to be standing on Björnson's own territory. Everybody knew exactly how far it was to his place, and the last two hours of the way I was driven by a little girl who took me past wealthy two-storeyed farm-houses rising from the rich pasture land, drove me round a beautiful winding road, jumped down, opened the gate, sprang on to her seat again, and without consulting me, drove through the entrance and up the drive, stopping at the door of a large, low building which was Björnson's country seat.

Outside, under the wide-spreading roof, sat his wife and daughters, surrounded by guests who were staying in the house. The author was writing, but he received me. He was sitting at his writing table in a large low room—a regular peasant's room. His feet were resting on a polar bearskin which had been presented to him by a society of advanced women, and a gigantic vase filled with cut roses was placed on a pedestal beside him. He informed me that the house had been an old farm which he had bought and fitted with all the requirements of modern life. We partook of the

midday meal in the old room that had formerly been the servants' hall, and where now, instead of servant and maid, were assembled a large gathering of Danish, Swedish and Finnish "women's rights women." Having dined, we drank coffee in the drawing-room, which had been the ball-room, but was now furnished according to Parisian taste with flowers, *chaises longues*, cream-coloured curtains with red gauze linings, *bibelots* and oil paintings. Presently an old lady entered; she had an aquiline profile and yellow waving curls over her ears, she was thick-set and broad-shouldered with a fresh red complexion and small sparkling eyes, one could see at once that she was a feminine Björnson. "My mother," said he, "she is ninety years old." And this giant's mother, herself a giant, spoke and greeted us in as lively and hearty a manner as a person of sixty. When we had finished our coffee, Björnson led me out on to the new balcony which encircled the house. He glanced over the rising land with its luxuriant pasture. "Our people are being corrupted," he said. "Our press and our life are full of lies. I am writing an article against lies, the lies with which we are being poisoned." He made a gesture with his arm across the distant country, and exclaimed, "Lying must be abolished!"

I was obliged to go, as my little coachman was waiting. We retraced our steps through the old room with its low ceiling and exquisite Parisian furniture, and its glass cupboard filled with plate. I drove away meditating on the strange contrast

between this farm house and its artificial fittings worthy of a town mansion, and I heard Björnson's pathetic voice calling to his country, "Lying must be abolished!"

III

Björnson was the son of a peasant; it was only in later life that his father became a pastor, and from him Björnson has inherited a theological tendency. He is essentially a preacher and religious teacher, he is never happy unless he has something to proclaim. But as he is not one of those who enjoy self-denial, he prefers that those very contradictory truths, which he has preached during the course of years, should take the form of a manifestation of the joy of life.

This is Björnson's chief characteristic. During his whole life and in all his writings, he has sought to unite theology with materialism. All his writings, no matter how extreme, had their origin in a compromise between the two.

Björnson began his literary career as a writer of peasant tales, followed by a succession of historical dramas; but when the age began to demand a new form of literature, his creative faculty came to a standstill. His last works in the old style are not to be compared with his earlier ones.

In 1869, Ibsen wrote *The League of Youth*, which was the first of his social dramas. It is connected with peculiar circumstances to which I shall return

later. Björnson's next piece was called *A Bankrupt*, and as an emotional drama it manifested the same tendency as Ibsen's satire, *i.e.* the tendency to criticise society. Next followed an overwhelming mass of literary productions with ever-widening horizons, and Björnson became a European celebrity. From henceforward he became the most important factor in the progress of culture in Germany.

The causes of this revolution were threefold. In the first place it was probably due to a disheartening sense of failure which led him to seek for a wider scope, forced him to break through the innate narrowness and stability of his mind with violence to himself, and drove him to become a disciple of Brandes and to take food for the mind wherever he might find it, in Stuart Mill, Darwin, Spencer, the religious critics of Germany, Taine, and the modern Frenchmen. Next the stimulating influence of Brandes himself, who drove the contemporary generation of northern writers into the mazes of problematic literature, and finally—but, as I think, chiefly—the example of Ibsen. Björnson, as an author, was always a genius, and consequently he was not able to accomplish much by means of teaching, lecturing, philosophical discussions and hairbreadth argumentations; these remained dead to him, until one came who showed him the way.

Next followed a succession of sketches from modern life on a basis of reform. The tragi-comedy of the merchant's worm-eaten house was

followed by the tragi-comedy of modern publishing, as treated in *The Editor*. The prudery of the modern system of educating girls, and the misfortune of having a dissolute father, provides material for a drama entitled *The New System*; while in *Leonarda*, the snivelling morality of the present day is contrasted with the cheerful and unprejudiced views of the grandmother.

Here also Björnson was the energetic, gifted pedagogue, who by fair means or foul was the first to inculcate the elements of tolerance into his countrymen. He had not much psychological depth, and his tendency was in favour of atonement in the old æsthetic sense as it originated in Germany. In just this sense life was not realised in full earnest, nor life's contrasts in their inexorability. There were always mistakes which only needed to be explained in order that repentance and amendment might ensue.

Björnson rose swiftly to the summit of his fame. He became a kind of head prophet in Norway. There was no political, social, religious or economical question on which he had not a weighty—often an ominously weighty—word to say; sometimes it was a suggestion, less frequently an opinion, or word of advice. Gradually, however, social criticism in the general sense of the term became stale, while on the other hand a new, brand new problem appeared above the horizon.

This was the problem of Nora, the woman who wishes to be first a human being and then a

woman, it had been handled by Ibsen many years before, and had provided a subject for Kielland's widely known literary works. Nora's generation was already grown up and her children were numerous. Kielland described the virtuous woman and the good-for-nothing man, the sensible, earnest, thoughtful girl and the scum of society. In Sweden a multitude of unhappy wives took refuge in authorship, and called down a fearful judgment on the husbands of all classes of society. Life had influenced literature and now literature retaliated upon life with practical results. The petticoated population of the three Scandinavian kingdoms began to cogitate upon its own importance. The air was filled with an incredible number of women's "works," and an incredible amount of feminine talent was discovered. Just as a young girl in Germany is taught the art of capturing a protector with Gretchen wiles, in Scandinavia she was taught to think about herself and her own importance with the earnestness of a Nora in the third act. And just as a young girl in Germany grows squint-eyed from being always on the look-out for a husband, so the Scandinavian girl of fifteen and sixteen had already lost her youthful simplicity, her natural and unconstrained manner. Her walk, deportment, and tone of voice seemed to demand attention, and everything concerning woman was discussed and debated. The Liberal press of the three countries, mindful of woman's indirect influence on votes, bowed the knee and worshipped

her intelligence and magnanimity, and man's delight knew no bounds if, at a meeting of Conservatives, a young lady hooted like a street-boy. Every number of the progressive journals contained at least one notice on the results of the struggle for the emancipation of women. Young women were expected to be as strong as men, and young women were anxious to be strong in order that they might inspire men with respect. All young girls were taught swimming, gymnastics, bicycling and skating. Rowing clubs were started for women, debating clubs and preparatory schools for university examinations, schools for artistic handicraft and women's rights unions, yet in each of these there was always a man as manager. Marriage was despised, but the right to propose was claimed should they suddenly be seized with the desire to make a man happy. They entertained a great confidence in themselves and in the mutual fellowship of women's interests, while they vowed eternal unity, sisterhood and friendship. The universities were open and all the colleges were accessible to women; they became students and studied law, philosophy and medicine. Sometimes they tried to speak during the hour for practice in philosophy, but without any great result. Indeed, there was very little result at all beyond the production of a couple of lady doctors, a deluge of village school teachers, and a remarkable increase of ill-health. But at any rate they had succeeded in proving their in-

tellectual gifts, although in order to do so they had plunged up to the ears in the stupefying machinery of learned study against which an ever-increasing number of the best men were raising their voices in protest. They became telephone clerks, telegraph clerks, railway commissioners, statisticians, superintendents, and in all these newly gained functions they generally took pains to be more consequential and more disagreeable than their male colleagues. But what the rising generation of women loved best were the fine arts. They painted and wrote, reviewed and edited, they petitioned the government for scholarships and the suffrage, for the right of property and other rights, some of which were granted, others promised. The average men joined hand in hand to assist their efforts, and at first the whole movement promised success. It was an undoubted success in fact, but only among the middle class. At that time no one had as yet realised that the movement was purely the result of the unimaginative, poverty-stricken spirit of the poorer middle class parent, who thanks Heaven when he has "disposed of" his children, and weeps tears of joy when his daughters are "able to provide for themselves" and are therefore no longer in need of being "provided for," which last is always connected in his mind with household worry and expense.

Of course Björnson did not realise it either, and it was not until much later that he took an active part in the movement, for he had never been the pioneer

of any cause. It was only when the movement was well started, and the majority were interested in it, that he gave it his support, and Björnson's support was the "open sesame." Björnson was the right man and the right author to popularise it with success, with only too great a success.

The northern woman had developed out of wife-hood and domesticity into different stages of individualism. All varieties of sex were evolved, and the creative talent proffered a selection of degenerate breeds: freshly developed and deadened natures, erotomaniacs and sexlessness, the woman who theorises, the woman who demands her rights, the woman whose instincts are asleep, the woman whose head is hot and whose senses are cold, the woman whose chastity is aggressive, every kind of artificial product in fact, with here and there the rare exception of the free, proud nature of one who is a law unto herself.

It was in the year 1884 that the novel appeared which was intended to reform public morals, it was called *Thomas Rendalen.* The introduction is a kind of ancestral history of the hero's family, and it may be counted as one of the greatest things that Björnson has ever written; its historical spirit and word-colouring are such that one might fancy it to be a genuine production of the latter half of the seventeenth century. The continuation of the story describes a model educational establishment founded on a new moral principle, and is the first of Björnson's works which is written from an

English and American standpoint. A victorious warfare is waged against the stupid prejudices of society and the distorted and harmful system by which girls are educated. A dissolute man of the world who, with his hypnotic glances, has seduced a young girl of respectable family, afterwards forsakes both her and her child in order to marry a rich young lady who offers no objection in spite of possessing an accurate knowledge of the facts. The "fallen" girl with her child is honourably received into the model establishment. But the real hero is Thomas Rendalen, a youth of German extraction, who was begotten through violence and violation, but is rescued from this evil inheritance by a wise training, and later on by an equally wise system of self-training. His mother looks after him, she has been trained in England as a teacher of gymnastics and is superintendent of the model establishment, and on one occasion during her short married life she had a fearful tussle with her brutal husband in which she sufficiently proved her physical superiority. It is a novel on the training of the sexual impulse. The idea of the book, which is repeatedly illustrated by new examples, is to show that the union between man and woman is not a condition of the highest physical and spiritual welfare; that philanthropical works, and other more or less external diversions, are also very fine remedies. In the improved version of *The Gauntlet*, Björnson maintains that impurity is far worse than celibacy. A woman

beginning life is considered pure, unless she has been seduced; but a man is considered impure. Education is held to be the highest means and aim of life, and the union between man and woman, from being an eternal source of strength for both, is degraded into a temporary arrangement for the procreation of the race. *Thomas Rendalen* became the gospel of the school mistresses, teachers, telegraph clerks and other women who, on account of their position in life or their personal idiosyncracies, are debarred from marriage. It surrounded the compulsory spinsterhood of the feminine portion of our higher stratum of society with a halo of glory, and the hearts of the discontented women of the north—married and unmarried—were laid in thousands at the feet of Björnson.

This was all that he staked in the movement. While new wishes and new needs were being aroused in a multitude of women, among whom were the most refined, the most advanced, the most developed of their sex; while a new type of womanhood was being evolved which sought for emancipation and groped after it only to find it in an unsatisfying, stupid, and distorted form; he remained glued to the superficial, put boarding-school education in the place of domestic discipline, morality in the place of Christianity, and made woman a generous offer of independence and personal freedom in return for the renunciation of her sex. And as to men he had once uttered the celebrated cry, "Passion must be abolished:" so to women

he says: "Sex is nothing, it is entirely a matter of secondary importance, the fruit of a poet's debauched imagination. There are many joys, a teacher's joys, a pastor's joys, a student's joys, which are far more natural to a woman's nature than the artificial and overrated fiction of love." And with regard to their intercourse with men, he carried his snivelling morality and unseemly enquiries as far as the bridal bed.

In his next and, so far, his last novel, Björnson wandered *In God's Ways.*

The subject of it is the marriage between a young girl who is childlike in her ignorance and a man who has become blind and lame in consequence of his excesses. Their separation, combined with the subsequent re-marriage of the young woman, is regarded both by society and by her relatives as an act of adultery. She is unable to endure the accusation, and dies from the cruelty of her fellow creatures. The person of next importance in the book is a young man who cures himself of a secret vice by means of diligent duet-playing with this same young woman, and by a still more diligent practice of running on all fours and other gymnastic exercises.

Such is the nature of Björnson's contribution to the psychology of sex.

With regard to the moral conclusions of his latter period, he takes his stand beside Tolstoy as an ascetic; and like Tolstoy, who has wasted a grand psychology, Björnson has squandered a rich

lyrical faculty on a mutilated ideal. Asceticism stands and falls with religious enthusiasm, and consists, in most cases, of nothing but religious enthusiasm; this is why, with Tolstoy, it went hand in hand with a return to positive Christianity; but Björnson, who became a religious freethinker at the same time that he became an ascetic, planted the moral that he preached on a far more slippery soil — on the soil of Degeneration.

* * * * *

In Ibsen's first social drama, *The League of Youth*, he has drawn a satirical portrait of Björnson in the person of the central figure of the piece— Stensgaard, the adventurer and popular speaker. Hjalmar Christensen points out the likeness in his newly published work, called *Northern Writers*.

When we, at the end of Björnson's career, examine the collected works of this celebrated author, we are impressed with the superficiality, the clap-trap precipitation and inward wavering which he displays whenever he takes part in the problems and social questions of the day. Every new book of his clearly proves to us that what he pathetically offers as gold is in reality nothing but dross, and in his last collection of *Tales* the tone of persuasion, which in old time so often won him the victory, sounds distressingly false. It was always his ambition to advance with the age, and

he has met with the fate that must ever be the experience of those who aim no higher. The age does not allow any one to keep pace with it for long, and he who is not in advance of it will soon find himself in the rear.

The Women-Haters: Tolstoy and Strindberg

I

Leo Tolstoy

THERE are mornings in summer when the sunshine is radiant, and when the earth smells so fresh and sweet that body and soul expand in a feeling of exultant health and strength; and then no matter where we are, or how it comes to pass, the Russian world springs up before our eyes, and the Russian woman, with her hearty laugh and motherly figure, rises before us as the living incarnation of just such a morning. Working girls with handkerchiefs over their heads, round, red-cheeked, merry-faced girls with large hips, dressed in pink cotton skirts, their stockingless feet in high-heeled spatterdashes; little ladies with smiling eyes appearing under their flowered hats, and the large, well-developed figures of grown women kindly disposed, walking with indolent, matronly carriage—they pass us by one by one; we know their faces as little as we know their names, they vanish as quickly as they came, and like all the vague though memorable

impressions of our first childhood, they come softly as the twilight, and glide away like the image of a dream.

I was born in Russia, and in moments such as these it is never the women of the other countries where I have lived who appear before me, never French women, or Germans, or Scandinavians, but always and only the Russian women, because it is only they who harmonise with nature and unite with her in an indefinable sense of unity and enjoyment.

There are other days in summer when nature seems to weep and shiver, when the clouds hang over the earth like dirty grey rags, out of which the rain drips, drips; when the grass lies as though it were mown, and the harvest is spoilt, when the trees sway hither and thither like weary people rocking their sorrow, and an unbroken desolate wail passes through the air like the sound of a monotonous sigh. Whoever has not seen days such as these dawn on the endless Russian plains and drag to a weary close, he does not know their solitude and melancholy. Nowhere as there, in those Russian wildernesses far removed from civilisation, does nature speak as clearly, and make humanity her mirror. Nowhere is happiness so careless and the heart so large, and nowhere does fear so clutch at the throat like invisible hands which grasp and then slacken their hold—slacken their hold, only to grasp the tighter. . . .

At the moments when these impressions arise, I see behind them and through them something which resembles a large and powerful man's head, with a broad forehead, and the dark, sparkling, deep-set eyes of a thinker and seer, eyes which seem as though they were trying to creep inwards. Sometimes this head is set on a uniform, and sometimes on a peasant's smock; sometimes he is young with moustaches, and his hair is cut short; sometimes he is old with a wrinkled face, and the greasy, waving hair of a peasant, with a long Russian peasant's beard; but the head always rests upon the same broad shoulders, the same giant's body, and there is always the same shy, sombre gleam in his eyes, the cold gleam which betokens the lonely fanatic. The youthful head was the head of Tolstoy when he wrote *The Cossacks*; the aged one belongs to the author of *The Kreutzer Sonata.*

In the interval between these two were produced works of such a deep and genuine character as have not been surpassed by any contemporary writer, I allude to the story called *Family Happiness*, and the novels *War and Peace* and *Anna Karenina.*

A short time ago Tolstoy's writings were the great literary event of Europe. His reformatory zeal moved and perplexed even the unbelievers; his confessions startled society; and his probing into all the layers of human nature, which had hitherto been ignored in accordance with a highly-respected custom, aroused the anxiety and excitement of all who had senses and nerves, especially

those with a bad conscience who had suppressed their senses, and with ill-used nerves that sought vengeance.

Tolstoy writes from the moral standpoint—his own peculiar standpoint—of the man with a bad conscience.

The man with a bad conscience had long led a hidden existence as a church penitent when the philosophical writer Friedrich Nietzsche discovered him and drew him into the light of day out of the darkness of life and of literature. Since then it has become possible to know him and to study his character.

But it is not often that this study possesses as many finger-posts to point the way, as many rifts in the veil, as are disclosed in the personality of Tolstoy.

His books are the personification of Russian nature with its golden laugh and soul-devouring melancholy; the healthy frivolity and spontaneity of the Russian woman and the self-tormenting sectarianism of the Russian man.

In all Tolstoy's books there is an ever-recurring figure which is none other than himself, depicted in a manner that combines an intimate knowledge with perfect candour. This figure is connected throughout an extensive network of fine root fibres with the profoundest qualities of the Russians as a typical race. Concerning Tolstoy as a private individual, we are, so to speak, lacking in all psychological data, with the exception of

those which he has himself given us in his various confessions, and which, for that very reason, are almost useless with regard to their psychology. But like all authors, great or small, he has unconsciously revealed himself in his novels, especially in those longer ones which he has since disowned; and now when the *Kreutzer Sonata* has fixed a boundary, behind which not even the most extreme moral severity can discover a second, and when the great life-painter has attained to the negation of life, there is a peculiar interest attached to the enquiry as to what were the national and individual circumstances which conducted him thither, and what were the stations on the road towards the crucifying of the flesh which are indicated in his books.

Three main points occur to my mind, although they are apparently quite unconnected with one another; these are:

A depth of intuition in his grasp and comprehension of woman which is unequalled by anything in the whole of European literature.

An everlasting bad conscience which wears a squinting expression of asceticism, and which, in all his writings, takes its stand between him and the woman and lies in wait for love's sacrifice.

A secret hardness and spiritual reserve which acts like a bitter taste in the mouth, and gives the lie to the universal gospel of love in his later works and the craving for union with the woman in his earlier ones. With an evil-eyed love of

cruelty it attaches itself to the most private conditions of life, and rejoices when sweetness is turned to gall; it evinces a refined brutality in self-torture, a sensation of positive delight in the arousing and enduring of pain, all of which are national and psychological features in the spiritual life of the Russian race, and a key to the perversities of its countless religious sects.

At the root of it all there is something like a dark unrest, a hearkening terror, a mistrust, which makes him uncomfortable where he is, and lonely where he loves.

No other literature has understood women and described them as vividly as the Russian. Take for instance Turgenev's young girls at the time of their physical and spiritual awakening, think of the wavering indecision of their lonely inner life, filled with wishes of which they are hardly conscious, while as yet untouched by experience; think of the vegetative, half-indifferent sensuousness of his widows, think of Garschin's inspired description of the demi-monde, of Dostoievsky's Sonias and Gruschenkas and other doubtful social phenomena, in the description of whom he is as successful as he is the reverse in his gentlewomen. The new feature in these writers is their astonishing depth of psychology, their instinctive grasp of the side of woman's nature which is not turned towards man, and their intuitive comprehension of her as a feminine being dumb and unveiled in their sight. French literature knows nothing of it. In France

a young girl's life begins on her first meeting with a man, and the charm of her womanhood is only revealed with her first love-affair in marriage. But that is the stupidity of authorship modelled in accordance with the conventional rules and acquired blindness of a school of literature. In Russia there is, strictly speaking, no school, either in literature or anywhere else, there is no so-called "good school" for anything at all, and accordingly there is no tradition, no taste cultivated by morality, nothing fixed, no fashion, no high road. The Russian writer, with his gentle erotic nature and sensitive yearning soul, can wander whither he will. He has the sharp eyes of a young race, the unshrinking gaze which has not been blunted by generations of culture, and which is quick to realise all that it has seen. The young Russian girl is not only "a girl," she is a woman. She has not undergone the hypocritical convent education of the French girl, she knows nothing of the German girl's bourgeois conventions, and she has more temperament and more natural spontaneity than either. These are two of the reasons why in French literature a woman only becomes an individual when she is loved, and why in the German literature of the last century, even in that of the newest realistic school, she is not an individual at all but only a being who belongs to a human species, and these are also the reasons why in Scandinavian literature she is endowed with a half timid, half sorrowful individuality.

Woman as woman, unconditional and complete in the essence of her being, in the relative perfection of her nature before she comes into contact with man, has never yet been described. To do so is the task allotted to a future literature starting from other presumptions and working under other aspects.

The reason that the Russians are in advance of other nations in this particular is, I think, that with them there has never been a historic period of the cult of woman with all its visible and invisible offshoots. As in their religious conceptions the ideal of womanhood is not so much the "spotless Virgin" as the "Mother of God," so in the language of the people there is no separate form for addressing a young girl, and when the ordinary Russian wishes to ingratiate himself with a woman he calls her "Matiuschka" (little mother), regardless of her age or position. Woman in the fulfilment of her natural function—woman as a mother—is that which appeals most to the direct consciousness of the Russian. Hence the artificial barrier, which the postulate of purity had raised between the man and woman of western Europe, falls away, and the Russian beholds woman as unity, as nature.

The Russian woman sees herself in the same light. No moral arrogance, no pose of purity has become a second nature to her. With the exception of a thin coating of western European culture and notions of propriety, she is more of

a natural being, more whole-hearted and spontaneous in her affections, and more decided in her sympathies and antipathies than the woman of western Europe.

No Russian writer is more profoundly conscious of it than Tolstoy, and not one has described it with greater intuition.

It was this that originated characters like the Cossack girl in *The Cossacks*, who permeates the whole book with the warmth of her healthy young person, whose silence is more convincing, deeper, and more apparent than any exchange of thought between a man and woman; who loves and sacrifices herself unhesitatingly with the instinct of an animal, and rejects the young officer's love, without being aware of it, which is, to him, the bitterest and most personal humiliation of all.

This was the origin of that child-woman in *War and Peace*; I think her name was Natascha or Nadieschda. That enchanting being who has just reached the age of transition when so many shoots sprout which cause life to perish or starve, unless they are too feeble to grow at all,—poor little blossoms that vibrate with a nervous shudder, seeking to hide themselves in fear of the beatings of her pulse, the variations of her every mood, while she seeks relief from her tears in the bed and arms of her mother—still a child, already a woman! This was also the origin of those scenes in the same book where the boy and girl seek one another, play and dance together, and cannot be

happy without one another. A true picture, a piece of child-psychology, the depth and truth of which is shown at a glance.

There is also a thoughtful young officer in this book, who is in love with the merry playfellow of his childhood; but she slips away from him, and he marries an elderly, faded, impersonal spinster, and looks for happiness in a marriage grounded on mutual sympathy.

Then, for the third time, and this time the portrait is better executed and the likeness is more striking, the same young man steps forward as Lievin in *Anna Karenina.* He is tall and strong, honest, with the Gallic temperament, but awkward and somewhat clumsy in confiding his inner life; he belongs to the class of men whom women ignore, whose presence awakens a vague shyness in them. There is something in his nature which arouses a feeling of distrust and dislike in women. What is it? Can it be a want of feeling, an absence of sympathy? Or is it something in his person that is physically repellent? His first advances meet with no response, it is possible that they are misunderstood, and he is bitterly disheartened. Later on, when the young girl has herself undergone a disappointment in love, she expresses herself willing, and they marry. But here already, many years before the aged Tolstoy wrote *The Kreutzer Sonata,* the first months of marriage are described as a torture. Lievin experiences a feeling of shame and disillusion. They

try to avoid one another, to avoid being together; they have nothing in common. When they avoid each other, his conscience reproaches him; when they are together, his bad conscience is a torture to him. It is really nothing but a process of animal existence, represented as a psychological mystery. The husband goes on his way in careless indifference, and held fast by the circle of ideas belonging to society and the Church, becomes displeased and irritable. There are a number of men in whom the prudery of the spirit and the denseness of the perceptions never permit of that refinement of impulse which is love. It is merely a psychological peculiarity, and is neither moral nor immoral; but according to our ideas of morality, love must co-exist with marriage, and the thinker who realises that it is not there has a bad conscience. His bad conscience makes nature appear evil in his sight, and casts a halo over everything that might deliver him from it. Asceticism, as an eternally unsatisfied desire, possesses the extra advantage of being a never-ending delight, an inverted pleasure. This feature is deeply impressed on the character of the Slav; it is a combination of those two principal features of the Russian temperament—sensibility and passiveness. It is from this, the psychological standpoint, that we must view Tolstoy's increasing moral rigour as displayed in his works. When we remember that it is a Russian author who chooses this problem for his motive, and that all great Russian writers

are as admirable in their powers of observation as they are second-rate thinkers, as subtle in their psychology as they are helpless altruists—both indications of a young literature—then his obscure personality loses much that is incomprehensible and confusing.

At last Lievin finds rest for his conscience and satisfaction in his marriage through the birth of a child, which seems to bring a meaning into it and also, to a certain extent, an excuse. The other couple, Anna Karenina and Vronsky, cannot find either, because in their free union the child is no excuse, but only a burden. With an incomparable discernment and rare genius in the delineation of the characters and their social surroundings, Tolstoy describes the unceasing torment of this union, until Anna Karenina's wish to destroy herself breaks out into a brutal form of suicide. Not one single moment of happiness has fallen to the lot of these equally warm-hearted and passionate people; the entire description presents nothing but a continual judgment on injured morality.

But before the sinful relationship had begun—as long as love is nothing but an unconscious wave, a sweet, painful, sunny smile in the soul of Anna Karenina—what writer can compare with Tolstoy in his intuitive understanding, his unhesitating description of the woman? With what yearning sympathy his thoughts must cling to her in order to grasp the impalpable lines of her being! But the portrait of the young girl in *Family Happiness* is

still more worthy of admiration than that of the matured woman. There we have everything: the innocent sensuousness of the first awakening of womanhood in the child, the woman who is such a thorough woman, with her inexplicable attraction, her thoughtless impatience, and her active imagination which transforms the first man whom she meets into *the* man, the beloved man, to whom she gives her whole affection.

There is a scene in the book after the young girl has had her hot Russian bath, when, with her hair still wet, she sits at the coffee table out of doors and turns the head of an elderly gentleman, who is her only male acquaintance; then there is a second scene where they both look for cherries on the trees—and such a description of pure sensuous delight on a warm, damp, dreamy summer's day as I have never seen equalled anywhere.

And yet it was this same author who wrote the dangerous, poisonous *Kreutzer Sonata*, and preached the doctrines of a misogynist on a basis of universal love for humanity, a love which was to end with the extermination of the human race.

The time must soon be at hand when "universal love" will be dragged from under its consecrated veil, and examined psychologically and physiologically as to its conditions and its origin. The question is whether it springs from a superabundance or a deficiency. All-embracing love, such as the "universal love of humanity," has always looked down with an evil eye upon the

great natural basis of all love, love between man and woman, and has never ceased to preach its inferiority and its baseness. Nowadays we hear the old song accompanied by new instruments resounding simultaneously from Russia and Norway. But nowadays we take the preachers themselves and analyse them through and through, heart and soul.

When we examine the personality of a great master like Tolstoy, what do we find? First that strange, absorbing impulse, the desire to create, to reveal himself, which indicates an excessive consciousness of the ego. In his youth there was apparently an intense longing to make himself understood without the mental capacity necessary for success; failure resulted in shyness, uncertainty, doubt, and according to his own confession he experienced a transient, sensual love without spiritual depth. He was out of harmony with himself in consequence, and at last the longed-for event took place—he married. It was a marriage such as there are thousands: healthy bodies, dried-up souls, the temperament of a thinker and fanatic with a narrow and obstinate nature, very little real knowledge, very little power of intellectual expansion, while with increasing years was added an increase of moral severity. Discontented with the primal conditions of existence, his writings showed an increase of pessimism, while an ever greater number of past joys escaped his memory, and there was no pleasure that did not leave an after-

taste of bitterness. When as an elderly man he looked back upon the first time when a young girl caused his pulse to beat the faster, he sought to explain the circumstance in the *Kreutzer Sonata* by describing her as the only one who is pure and good, thus rendering a coarse touch to the imagination which betrays itself in the glorification of the child-woman. Hence the pose of a social reformer who takes an egotistic delight in nourishing the consciousness of martyrdom.

These are a few general outlines contributing to a picture of Tolstoy, as he appears to me in his writings. For I believe that it is a man's personal experiences which determine his opinions and form the rudiments of his mind and character, and that these rudiments, however much they may be obscured by time, are still there to be discovered by those who seek them.

II

August Strindberg

AUGUST STRINDBERG is one of the most wonderful and perfect examples of a type which, in our vacillating age, frequently rises to the surface and endeavours to make its mark everywhere; a type full of aggressiveness and impatience, seldom made after a pattern and frequently full of imperfections, but with touches of real genius as well

as barren wastes, full of lapses, but full of promises for the future. It is a mixed type. The strange combinations in his character, the seeming contradictions and the flaws in his education make it a very difficult study for the average person. It would require a genius, one to whom the many hostile elements appear microscopically enlarged. The mixture of races, that inseparable ingredient in human physiology, is as yet an unexplored region of investigation. The question is one with which Strindberg has been greatly troubled, and he has contributed abundant material for its solution.

He has done more. The great literature that he has created is more priceless as raw material to the psychologist than as a work of art. In all his writings Strindberg occupies the reader's mind in a twofold manner: first, with the psychological results to which he individually attains; secondly, with the psychological results to which the reader *malgré lui* attains, and which often contradict the others on matters of chief importance. Whoever studies Strindberg finds himself in the presence of a double mirror; in the one he sees the world reflected in Strindberg's mind, and in the other as an antidote, he sees the mind of Strindberg presenting its own solution in the moment of its birth and reflecting its psychology in the reader's soul.

Strindberg's collected works are really only biographical contributions towards the solution

of the riddle of his ego. He has never ceased to speculate on the mystery of his own being, and this speculation has always vented itself in indignant storming against outward enemies. What does he mean by his angry guesses at the riddle of the woman sphinx? You have but to turn this sphinx round and it is no longer a woman. It is the man sphinx—the riddle that is himself.

No writings have ever been of a more personal character than those of Strindberg. But perhaps no writings have ever issued from an ego that was less complete. I should like to express it as follows: In a mixed type like Strindberg's no unity has as yet been able to form itself beneath the threshold of consciousness, for there the instincts of different races and epochs rush helter skelter. All that he has written fell as an instantaneous reflection on his soul, and was thrown back in an impressionist picture. In Strindberg's works we find no transitions, no coherence. And since he has always presented himself as a riddle to the passing crowd, it is quite fair to regard the riddle as common property, which any one may seek to solve if he is not afraid to do so.

I

I have often met Strindberg and have received the most contradictory impressions concerning him. But in one way he was always the same,

and that was in his outward manner. He demanded respect, and he invariably treated himself with the greatest respect. There was always something subdued and severe about him as though he were keeping guard over an invisible and holy relic, against which neither he nor others might sin; his voice, when he spoke, was low and imperious, and his threatening gaze was always ready to quell any signs of feminine flippancy, although he would have been very unwilling to be deprived of it altogether.

That was Strindberg as he appeared to the multitude. But for those who knew him better, there was another Strindberg, not more sociable and affable than the first, but one who was certainly not pompous, who was a thorough Swede, a boon companion whose good hours fell at the first cock-crowing, a humourist with an indistinct smile who played at chess with life, and cared less about the results of the game than for its subtle tactics, a man of great foresight, unreliable, impulsive, a man whose intellect impressed you and who wished to be impressive, and who in addition to this possessed the cunning of a boy.

The keynote, which was the solution to the nature of this contradictory and purposely mysterious being, was a suspicion that knew no bounds; suspicion for its own sake, suspicion as a principle, as the prerogative of a superior intellect, a suspicion against every one and everything which ended by becoming a suspicion of himself.

Strindberg has Finnish-Lapp blood in his veins. He comes of a poverty-stricken middle-class family which was undergoing a period of great pecuniary distress at the time of his birth. His father had known better times, but through his union with a servant-girl he had dropped out of the social circle to which he belonged. Three children were born before marriage, the author soon after the wedding. The mother was always ailing, and she died of consumption after the birth of her twelfth child. While the boy was growing up, the father and mother, with seven children and two servants, inhabited three rooms. The furniture consisted chiefly of beds and cradles. Children lay on ironing-boards and chairs, children lay in cradles and beds. Baptism, funeral! Baptism, funeral! Sometimes two baptisms one after the other without a funeral. The father was only seen at meals; his name was used to frighten the children, and "Papa shall hear of it," was equivalent to a whipping.

Education consisted in scolding and pulling the hair. Stern discipline was enacted in the home. Lying was unmercifully punished, disobedience likewise, and in after years corporal punishment was superseded by the menace: "What will people say?"

These facts are quoted from Strindberg's many-volumed autobiography, *The Maid-Servant's Son*, in which he lays down the law with inveterate bitterness against his origin, his childish impressions, the

order of society, the system of education, and against all bonds and fetters, customs and duties, which chain a man down from his first days to his last. He knows from the very beginning that he has not the courage to break loose from them, and that is why he pursues them with such untiring and embittered vengeance.

August Strindberg wrote *The Maid-Servant's Son* in his altruistic, socialistic period, when he believed in a social revolution that was to bring about the radical redress of his personal wrongs.

Strindberg is in this instance the link of a chain which winds through central Germany, but has scarcely forced its way as yet to the North and the South, for the North and Bavaria are peasant districts, and are, therefore, almost inaccessible to socialism. The middle class with its overflow into the proletariat is the real fostering soil of socialism. From a home like the one that Strindberg describes, the more gifted sons must necessarily go forth as socialists, if they have brains to think and souls to feel; or if they have any aspiration in their blood which calls itself the "honest ambition" of the bourgeois, they as surely become "jobbers" and "snobs"—or if they are geniuses, they aspire to the "super-man," and with a juggler's *salto mortale* flee past their misery into space. Strindberg's nature was possessed of a considerable share of all three categories. Chiefly genius, which, among the many surprises of life, always prepares for itself the greatest, for geniuses live in a state of

continual astonishment at the revelation of the great unknown in themselves, till at last, like Strindberg, they move about with an invisible crown on their heads, one might call it a crowned consciousness, for which they claim respect from all the world. The sure sign of a young bourgeois from a populous town is that he always requires a crowd of admirers. His self-confidence needs to be upheld by constant applause. Hence the striving for recognition, the love of advertising, and the longing to be puffed, which is the peculiarity of the newest literature proceeding from the middle class. Hence the prolonged cries of despair when this recognition or its material expression is lacking. The horizon of the bourgeois townsman is naturally bounded by the thin luminous line of those whom he sees in possession; the men who have enough, and more than enough, who inhabit the golden islands where enjoyment dwells, and whither he yearns to go, to take them by storm as a revolutionary, or enter them in triumph as a crowned genius. It is not their individuality merely which stamps these things with their personal value, they have a priceless, an imaginary worth, and only when they are his—the outward show of refinement, the elegant home, the newest fashion in dress, the woman of the upper class as wife and worshipper—everything "first-class," in fact, only then does he feel himself in the full possession of his ego. These characteristics show themselves early; they are the phenomena of the age. It is interest-

ing to observe whether the strongest personal emotion in a child is the desire for affection or the longing to occupy the first place. With the boy in the autobiography the last was the case; he wanted to be the favourite in the upper court—in other words, with his father and mother. When he found that the place he coveted was already occupied by his brothers and sisters, he would not accept of his grandmother's proffered affection, but despised it, for the simple reason that his grandmother was a person of no great importance in the household.

This absence of spontaneous affection is a trait which meets us everywhere in Strindberg's personal biography and his other literary works; it is a peculiarity that is extremely common in our day, although it is not often met with in geniuses, because genius is usually accompanied by a greater warmth of temperature. It is perhaps partly accounted for by the natural temperament of the people of northern Sweden, who are to the highest degree possessed of what the French call "la fougue," which burns like a conflagration and not like the all-pervading heat of a continual flame. But there is a deeper reason still which is to be found in the isolation and excessive inadequacy of Strindberg's nature, the restless, nomadic tendency, the savage impulse which impels him to obliterate his footmarks, to make himself inaccessible, mysterious, terrible, for all of which his autobiography presents many an authentic proof.

It may be his inherited, restless, undomesticated Finnish-Lapp blood which feels itself imprisoned in a small bourgeois family, and gazes around distrustfully like a wild animal in a cage. It is the blood of a race that remains always apart, that does not allow itself to be fathomed, but with the true nomadic instinct seeks to wipe out all traces of its own existence. It does not give its whole affection, as a child it has no comrades, as a man no friends, only a few stray acquaintances and boon companions. It is the blood that scents the enemy everywhere, that dreads the enemy yet goes in search of him if only for the sake of the long lonely raids which it remembers in the past. What in other phenomena of the age would signify a dying, a complete withering of the expansive faculty, was in Strindberg a beginning, a youthfulness of culture, so that one can point to him with tolerable certainty as an atavism—a reversion that is driven forward by a tremendous force, a combination of atavism and genius.

There is one special feature of this poverty of feeling in the autobiography which is peculiarly striking and suggestive, it is namely this, that the boy is not only lonely with regard to his parents, his brothers and sisters and comrades, but he is also lonely in his first love. Strindberg has not omitted to give us a study on sex in his *Story of the Development of a Soul*, as the sub-title is called. Psychological and physiological studies on this subject are sufficiently plentiful in modern Scandi-

navian literature, and some of them are contributions of permanent value to culture, contributions towards a truer knowledge of mankind, casting a bold and honest light on the unknown territory of human existence, such as will only be understood and appreciated in a more subtle and less prudish future.

With regard to Strindberg's contribution on the subject, the circumstances are not quite the same. But one thing is certain, that whatever has been confided to publicity on this subject in the north, however far-fetched and plain-spoken as regards the history of the strongest natural impulse, it is but the first seedling of a future literature—a pan-Germanic literature which will come perhaps soon, perhaps not until after our time. In these confessions everything is natural, productive and honest; souls and bodies, physical and spiritual emotions are one. Not so with Strindberg. It would need a searching discussion, a full statement of every single point in his autobiography, in order to prove the apparent and hidden crookedness of the emotions, the poisonous hostility of his terrified gaze at the opposite sex. From the very beginning his relationship to woman is as insipid as is usually the case in the middle class, and as brutal as the wildness of the nomads. The German passion, expanding with the first emotion of love in the desire for a reciprocative affection on the part of the woman, is not to be found. And here it is important to remark that this peculiar trait

in his character is the origin of the celebrated drama which bears the device: "Battle of the Sexes." There is also another point of importance connected with it, and that is that Strindberg from the first represents the man as good, suffering, tender-hearted, normal. That is not psychology, but it is the same in his later works. While his psychology of the woman is very deep, the man who is the unhappy victim of this brute is always the same brave, honest and worthy fellow. There are two sides to that. In the first place it is mere sophistry, in the second it points to a distinctive racial feature.

We find here a resemblance which few people would have looked for in Strindberg, and which certainly no one among his countrymen has as yet perceived. It points to the east, to Russia. Not only to the Russia of Tolstoy and Dostoievsky, but further to the east and deeper into the secret history of the races. It points to Asia, to the barren plains where wandered the Mongolian hordes. Yellow faces with prominent cheek bones and projecting skulls, faces with an expression of cruelty and suffering, envy and greed, terrible conquerors who exterminated the ruling races of ancient Scandinavia and the old Norse blood in Russia, amalgamated the gentle, lyrical, Slav temperament with their own fierce blood, and left memorials of their victories in mounds of dead men's skulls. Since those days every one who knows the Russian race discovers the same

conflicting elements; on the one hand the gentle lyrical faculty, the melancholy sensibility, which makes the Russians born psychologists, makes them the only intuitively psychological people in the world, and on the other hand the brutality of the Mongolian blood which, after long intervals of peace, vents itself in deeds of horrible cruelty. Hence that profound untrustworthiness that lies at the background of the Russian character. And here we must seek the connecting link if we would understand Strindberg. For this same Mongolian blood, thinned, it is true, forms the ancestry of that nomadic race from whence the Finnish Lapps and Strindberg himself are descended. It also forms the lower class in Finland from whence his first wife, although of noble birth, originated. Her features bore traces of the Finnish type as distinctly as Strindberg's own, and perhaps this accounts for the strong attraction that he felt towards her, for he doubtless felt the need of one of the same type in order to complete himself.

The Finns in Finland are a people belonging to an ancient culture, they are a poetical people, whereas the Russian Mongolians and the Swedish Lapps are quite uncultured. The chief characteristic in Strindberg's nature is the close proximity of genius and barbarism.

Strindberg is very un-Swedish in his outward appearance. The Swedish type is tall, slender, broad-shouldered, and the complexion, when it is

not ashen grey, is fresh and delicate, the head small with fair hair. Strindberg is a strong powerful man with sloping shoulders, and latterly he has assumed a corpulence that is characteristic of the Russians; his penetrating, far-seeing eyes have the uncertain, livid hue which is never found in the north except among mixed races, his jaws and cheek bones are broad and prominent, his hair long, black and curly, the slight moustache turned upwards, the mouth small and pointed as though he were about to whistle, the lips gracefully curved, and a complexion the colour of leather. This phenomenon is crowned with a powerful, square skull. The ears are diminutive and lie close to the head. His hands are remarkably round and small.

Behind this powerful forehead all the ideas that have moved the second half of this century have fermented, but only one thing original and new has taken shape, and that is the sombre instinct of sex hatred. Strindberg's one act has been to drag out this enmity from beneath the threshold of consciousness, where it had hitherto lain, to lend it speech and clothe it with an artistic form. He grasps hold of woman like an impetuous bourgeois, and treats her like a captured savage. Strindberg is like an instrument on which the age has played her shrillest tunes, but the strings have retained no recollection of them. As a young man he was a sincere Pietist; later on he became a pessimistic Altruist, then a Socialist and Utilitarian; he has

experienced social contrasts and class warfare as few have done, and has reproduced them as none of his contemporaries have ever done. He has writhed beneath the ineradicable consciousness of belonging to a lower class, and his daily habits and sole ambition were fixed on asserting himself as a member of the upper class. He was reckless, unruly, but he does not seem to have had any of that proud confidence in his own greatness which is the birthright of great personalities, who look upon themselves as the beginning and the starting point, and to whom the idea never occurs of fatiguing themselves in the race after that which is theirs by right. Strindberg is a genuine son of this plebeian age, for it needed a Nietzsche endowed with volcanic power to enable him to rise above himself and to proclaim himself a superman.

His self-psychology is full of contradictions, and it requires the reader's critical attention to disentangle the undercurrent of personal confessions from the artistic super-structure. It is very interesting to watch how the absence of spontaneous affection changes to a painful yearning for tenderness; when, for example, as a child, he has the feeling of being dependent on his busy mother, a common woman who did not bestow much love on him. It is still more interesting to watch how, on the occasions when he fell in love, he seems always to have had a reason. There is his first love-affair as a boy of fifteen, when the object

of his affections is a thirty-year-old girl, who is excitable and hysterical. She is engaged to be married, and forms a centre of attraction; young men and old men admire and rave about her, amongst others his father, and it is an immense gratification to be able to draw her away from them.

Already a feeling of repugnance — so often described by him in his later works as though it were the usual accompaniment of love—pervades their amorous *tête-à-têtes*, when she evinces her motherly superiority and completely captivates him; it is always the same manœuvring that he describes in his later women. But when writing from memory he can never depict them ludicrously and repulsively enough, cannot sufficiently indulge in expressions of antipathy and repugnance with regard to them, and this same characteristic is very apparent in his last book, called *A Fool's Confession*. Here also a former love and destined bride is described as an utterly worthless being, just as the noble lady whom he married was afterwards unmasked as an abyss of iniquity. The same is the case with the newly-married wife of the super-man in *By the Open Sea*. It is an abiding feature of Strindberg's works to separate with a shudder of disgust or in a paroxysm of anger and hatred after having tasted love. It is a characteristic feature of the Slav, and may possibly be a heritage from the savage blood of the Mongolians. We find it invariably, although

not so strongly expressed, in Tolstoy's otherwise pleasing descriptions. There are only two possible ways of accounting for it in Strindberg's literary productions; it must be due either to the author's temperament, or else to his experience of women.

For a long time I accepted the latter explanation, but after having learned to know him, and having often read his entire creative works, I am compelled to think that it would be too shallow an interpretation.

This rage against woman is connected with his indignation at every bond, every pressure, every circumstance and relationship that threatens to become permanent. Everywhere we find the same longing to escape, to leave no mark behind, to isolate himself, to hide. Everywhere in his studies, his interests, his opinions, the same sudden change, the same hatred of his broken fetters, and every intellectual and spiritual stage of development that is past appears to him like a broken fetter. In all Strindberg's writings we trace the struggle for the possession of his ever-changing ego; we continually observe an exaggerated self-consciousness, making vain and angry attempts to attain to his real self, reproving the whole of modern science for the sake of justifying and explaining the non-existence of a central point, a unity of the ego which is the missing centre of gravity in the unknown. Everything in him is temperament, nothing the result of coherent thought; he hates coherence as derogatory to himself, he is determined to be incomprehensible,

understood by none, and he introduces a dummy as a sort of pattern man, like the unhappy "Father," or like Axel, in *The Comrades*, who withdraws his own pictures from the Salon in order that his wife may exhibit hers—which he himself has painted; like the second man in *The Creditors*, who submits to being sucked to death by a female vampire; like the "Fool," in *The Fool's Confession*, who worships another man's wife as though she were a pure Madonna. When he sees the steamer passing by, on which she is travelling to visit some relations, he goes further and further into the sea, magnetically drawn towards the ship in which she is, and afterwards becomes her husband only to discover by degrees incredible details of iniquity in her. But he does not part from her, he does not experience that unconquerable feeling of positive aversion after which parting is no longer an act of the will, but an almost unconscious proceeding. Who is there who is not acquainted with all these traits in Russian literature? Turgenev has already described the weak man who is held captive by a brutal and licentious woman, the man who is passive and allows himself to be ruined by her, while all the while he looks on as a spectator might, and despises himself.

Despises himself! Here we find the difference, and perhaps also, if I may say so, the psychological quicksand in Strindberg's works. I take for granted that we are all agreed that the great Russian writers are honest psychologists. I would certainly make an exception of some of Dostoievsky's writ-

ings, some things he has concealed, and one could point out certain places where he has substituted a false trait and purloined an experience upon which the plot was built. But the earlier works of Turgenev, Garschin, Tolstoy, were never false either in themselves or with regard to their public. And when the men in them allowed themselves to be loved by a woman who claimed for herself "the man's prerogative," they saw clearly what they were doing and despised themselves for it.

Not so Strindberg's man. He cries out beneath the iron-soled slipper, but none the less he holds himself in high esteem; he esteems himself all the more highly for his forbearance with the daring she-devil who derides him on account of it; in this matter he possesses a higher degree of development, and before all else, he is incredibly moral. Strindberg's man is—especially in the stories where he manifests his hatred of women—moral to a degree such as in the New Testament is only expected of a Bishop, of whom it is said he must be the husband of one wife, and elsewhere only by Björnson and Young Men's Christian Associations. Strindberg's man is always strictly monogamous, because monogamy denotes a higher stage of development; his woman, on the other hand, is always polygamous, because woman and polygamy represent a lower stage of development. This monogamous man is devoted to the polygamous woman, the worse she is, the more devoted he becomes, and the more she treats him with con-

tempt, the more tightly his fetters bind him to her. There is something in this that resembles a trait in the character of the "maid-servant's son," of whom it is related in the autobiography that "he was quite indifferent to the fresh, red-cheeked girls whom he met at the dancing lesson, while on the contrary, the highly anæmic and hysterical girls, with the pale, waxlike complexions and black lines under their preternaturally bright eyes, had an irresistible attraction for him.". . .

II

I should like to take Strindberg's women one by one and examine them in connection with his personality and temperament, as it originally was, and as it became when accentuated by friction with his social surroundings and influenced by the atmosphere of the age in which he lived. His women are a set of dismal, mischievous, heartless creatures, only fascinating so long as the man is young and easily duped; afterwards, when he develops into the great mind who sees through the small mind and mimics it, they become ever more and more shrewish, less attractive, more perverse, till at last the day comes when the man with the great mind has grown sufficiently old and wise not to allow himself to be led by the nose any longer, and the woman, whose name is baseness, is finally dismissed.

The woman? Yes, for there is only one woman, the same woman whom he has described in all his principal works during the fourteen years of his authorship. It is a type that never varies, but grows more exaggerated each time, and he clings to it as though it were the only sounding-board for his cutting discords.

Strindberg is already to the fore in his first book, *The Red Room.* The hero, Arvid Falk, is himself. He is a man who has not yet found his own self, who does not venture to believe in himself, and who hopes in no future; a poor, penniless fellow who allows himself to be overawed by every bragging, self-confident person—in a word, a peculiar, unhappy, harum-scarum individual who is not yet awake to the consciousness of the ego.

There is only one woman in this book; she is Arvid Falk's sister-in-law, and has married above herself, she is a lazy and indolent person, coarse-minded and untruthful, stupid and vulgar.

This bashful man, who is like a timid savage, and the vulgar woman have as yet nothing to do with one another, they are types upon which the gaze of the young genius first fell—they represent his ego and his type of woman.

In *Herr Bengt's Wife* he has developed body and temperament. It is the description of a woman's many phases: discontent, happy love, the child, the quarrel after marriage, coquetting with others, reconciliation—it seems as though it had been written in a paroxysm of love. The

description is outwardly full of admiration, inwardly full of psychological analysis. It is the work of a seer who worships, while awake, the woman whose true self he perceives in his sleep and already despises. *Herr Bengt's Wife* was acted at the Dramatic Theatre of Stockholm, and Strindberg's wife played the part of heroine with great success, the only success she ever had on the stage. His next work was a book called *Marriages*, which consists of twelve stories of married life, black with the weft-yarns of life, beginning with pain, ending with death. He describes the tame love of the latter end of the nineteenth century which, fast bound hand and foot, drags her span of existence through economical, pathological and "universal human" gulfs. He describes the young student who engages himself to a fully developed girl of fourteen, who, during the ten years of their engagement, becomes a thin, shrivelled, nervous being, he marries without loving her and she grows to look more wretched than ever after giving birth to numerous children. He describes how the penniless young man brings the poor girl home, and they do not know how to bring up the children on an insufficient income; the couple are isolated from their social surroundings and forced to live in a back street, where their children play about in the gutter.

He describes how the young notary and his wife being their married life by giving expensive

dinners, because it is only possible to be young and newly married once in a lifetime. And when the child comes, the bailiff comes too, and all the fine furniture finds its way into the creditors' pockets, and the old father-in-law, the Major, who had foreseen what would happen, takes charge of his daughter and grandchild, while the young husband is left to become a celibate. He describes a man who both in character and temperament is predestined to be constant in love and marriage, but his wife, though of good family, is dissolute and wicked. He has to pay for her riding lessons and to entertain her lovers, look after her children and conceal her drunkenness—he is chained to her, he cannot free himself, he is monogamous in spite of his better judgment.

Or else he describes the marriage of a private tutor with a lady of noble birth who has never experienced a single womanly feeling, abhors her duty as a wife, and only does not refuse her husband when she wishes to obtain something from him. At the same time she is anxious to enjoy all the social advantages of a married woman, and for the sake of her frugal caresses the poor honest fellow allows himself to be chosen a member of all the associations and public institutions in which her empty vanity wishes to shine, till at last, much against his inclinations, he becomes a member of Parliament. In the midst of these tales of woe, of social and intellectual privation, Strindberg describes himself in a story

about an author and his family, called *The Bread Winner*, in which many of his brethren will recognise themselves. It describes the great author who gets up in the morning to make his own coffee, while his wife and the servants are still asleep, it describes him hard at work till the evening when he throws himself down upon the bed dead tired—Money! Money! All for Money! It tells of every single unsatisfied longing of which our age is possessed, of the everlasting means which never ceases to become an end in itself. The children run about aimlessly, while the servant girls read novels and the wife allows her friends to pity her for her husband's neglect. His mornings are spent in feverish effort which exhaust him till he is ready to faint, but the whip of anxiety and uncertainty urges him on till the post comes, and he opens his letters with a beating heart; the remainder of the day, until the late dinner hour, is consumed by negotiating with extortionate publishers and pressing creditors, corresponding in three languages with foreign newspapers, and reading reviews where anonymous rivals seek to deprive him of the goodwill of the public by which he lives, pointing at him with their inky fingers, leaving a dirty smudge on his reputation. And he is defenceless. How is he to punish the nameless vermin who lay their maggots in his flesh and afterwards fly off? Then follows the dinner in a strange restaurant, where the celebrated author is expected to contribute wit and intellect

to the conversation, and people are offended if the exhausted man stares at his plate in dyspeptic silence. In the evening, when he would like to be with his family, his wife goes to a party or to some place of entertainment. And one day the overworked "bread-winner" dies suddenly, his wife faints in the conventional manner, and her old women friends—with or without petticoats, as the case may be—exclaim in pained sympathy: "Poor unfortunate woman! He always was inconsiderate towards her, in life as in death!"

It is real life that Strindberg has described in his *Marriages*, that real life which the many live, but of which only the few are conscious. It is the profound inadequacy of the closest relationship, which neither our grandparents nor our fathers and mothers experienced, but only the children of the eighties of the nineteenth century. Everything in our day—joy no less than suffering—leaves a bitter after-taste on the tongue, which neither mineral waters, baths nor digestive pills can rid us of, since the evil is not of the body but of the soul, and proceeds from the incapacity to lead a vegetative life, or to resign oneself to circumstances. Formerly this discontent was general, and in Strindberg's works the blame was equally divided, but a couple of years after the publication of *Marriages*, a change took place. The universal picture of the age retreated, and everything pointed to woman and man's relation to her. In the course of a few years there

appeared a collection of dramas evincing a hatred of woman quite unparalleled in the literature of the world. It was just at the time when the Scandinavian movement for the emancipation of women was in full swing, with its natural accompaniment of women authors, and the air was filled with cries for equal justice to both sexes, the married woman's rights of property, the man's pre-nuptial chastity, etc.

It would be impossible to say that the Swedish ladies were graceful in their manner of introducing the new order of Society. Seldom has anything more discouraging been witnessed than the manner in which they enforced their demands upon men—demands which were in part quite reasonable. Woman forgot her womanhood and relied upon the thickness of her skull and her elbows, and in this her masculine phase she was by no one more seriously taken than by Strindberg. He waxed warm in the delight of the conflict. Armed to the teeth with the entire arsenal of superior qualities pertaining to man, brain and pockets filled to overflowing with the latest results of investigation, he went forth to wage war against the Amazons. He went forth because he wanted to be with them, for he loved the emancipated type. The emancipated woman attracted him, which the pious Marthas were never able to do, and because he loved her and because she appealed to his emotions, for that reason he also hated her, for with him hatred is another form of love.

He aimed at the wife in three dramas. The first attack took place in *The Father.*

The fable of *The Father* is comparatively well known. A Captain is bullied by the three women in his household, he is driven half mad by them and is reported to be quite mad, and is literally, not merely figuratively, put into a strait waistcoat. These three women are his wife, his mother-in-law (who does not appear in the piece), and his nurse. The three conspire together. The wife and the nurse drive him mad with their petty arguments, and the mother-in-law's bell ringing at stated intervals serves to precipitate his desperation.

But what makes these three women conspire against the man who is master of the house? The nurse and the stepmother, says Strindberg, are of an advanced age, consequently sexless, consequently men-haters.—Good. But the wife? —The wife is also a man-hater—Why?—Because all women are men-haters, with a few exceptions. —That is all very well, but it does not explain why the nurse, the mother-in-law and the wife should combine together. Mutual forbearance is not exactly a feminine quality, and to begin with, it is extremely unlikely that his nurse should live on friendly terms with the wife's mother. Yet in spite of that they combine. Why?—In order to embezzle the books that are sent to him, to pamper his mother-in-law and to spoil the child. From pure wickedness in fact? Well and good. But why do they not vent their wickedness upon

one another?—Because they are all three equally stupid, and that is why they prefer each others' company. Strange that the pretty young wife should not be bored with the two old women! Something is surely rotten in the state of Denmark? No, there is nothing rotten, it is the normal condition of all families.—That is all very well, Captain, but have you ever asked yourself whether your wife is satisfied with you?—To this question the author is wont to give an answer which, owing to its plainness, we cannot quote here. But I think that in this instance the author renders the psychology of the woman too easy. The lords of creation are apt to be rather conceited. Time is short and choice is limited, and in most cases the woman takes whoever she can get, and it often happens that she does not care for him afterwards. The more he loves her, the less she cares for him, and there we have the tragic conflict. The man does not observe it and goes on loving, the woman knows that he does not observe it, is offended, and revenges herself by tormenting him. He bears it patiently and loves her, but his love is clumsy and brutal. Now the woman gains the upper hand. She sees that he has not found her out and she knows that she will never be rid of him, the thought goads her anger, she feels that she is unpunished, and by degrees she becomes a fury. Who is the greater fool of the two?

The Comrades deals with the same problem.

Axel sacrifices himself in slavish subjection to his wife, who has artistic pretensions. He not only paints her pictures, but he also sees that they are accepted for the Salon and his own rejected. He works hard to earn money, and she throws it away in making merry with her friends. If he loses patience, she propitiates him with caresses. He lives solely for her, but she preserves an attitude of reserve towards him and is stupidly coquettish, easily attracted by other men, an all too tender confidante to her unmarried women friends. The society which she introduces into his house is a perfect menagerie of abandoned persons. Another yet more unhappy husband appears on the scene and confides in Axel. His wife has been a drunkard for many years, his daughters, who are still quite young, have had their minds polluted, but he allows them to be with their mother because he loves her. The dialogue between man and wife is a continual dispute with really clever variations on a limited theme. Here, as in *The Father*, there is the same reasoning of the great mind with the small one, which ends by the great mind becoming perplexed, yet always anxious to resume the fight. Final result: the woman is cast out and the man finds that his life is not worth living.

In another story, called *The Creditors*, we find the same woman and the same man, but this time the man is split in two halves—the one half consists of a great mind and the other of a sensitive nervous system. The sensitive nervous system

becomes epileptic from exhaustion brought about by the efforts of the great mind (who has lived so long without a better half) to concentrate its energies and rub up its dialectics to the sharpness of a razor. By virtue of this dialectic razor the breach between Adolf and Thecla is completed, but when she throws herself sobbing over the husband who is stricken before her eyes, the great mind is thunderstruck. Is it possible that she loved him after all?

In his drama, *Miss Julia*, the instincts of the upper and lower classes rebound upon one another with terrific fury. John, the son of the maid-servant, who is the best male character that Strindberg has ever created, gains the victory in a brutal struggle with his wife. In this piece Strindberg seemed to assert his deliverance from the clutches of woman, and afterwards, in his *Playing with Fire*, the man conquers again. A superficial abuse of the opponent is the inevitable accompaniment of a victory, and in *By the Open Sea*, the super-man triumphs over the dubious maiden, whose obvious dissoluteness he—the noble man with the great intellect—is extraordinarily slow in perceiving, and after seriously compromising her, he leaves her unmarried as a punishment.

III

Strindberg's next novel, *Tschandala*, is one of his least known works; as literature it is of compara-

tively small importance, but as a contribution to the psychology of the author it is an exceedingly valuable production.

Strindberg had gone to spend the summer in a country lodging where the proprietors are notoriously bad people. An ordinary man would have perceived the fact at once, but Strindberg's imagination began to work and swelled itself into a book of gigantic proportions. The outward circumstances remain the same, but the scene is pushed back a century and becomes a war between the patrician with the great mind and the plebeians with the small minds, who do all that they possibly can to ensnare him and to bring about his ruin. The only reason given is the envy felt by inferior minds and small souls for the great and noble. It is difficult to understand how a learned and distinguished man can exist with his wife and children amid such extremely revolting surroundings as those described, unless he is too poor to make a change; it is still more difficult to understand why he should have any dealings with the populace, unless it is that he takes a psychological interest in their study. The landlady's gipsy lover, who rules the house, has got him almost in his power, when the distracted lodger resolves on a plan whereby to annihilate him, well knowing that the ignorant man is subject to superstitious fear. He allures him into the meadow at night, and by the aid of a magic lantern he causes superhuman figures to pass before him. The trick is successful. The

tormented and ignorant landlord dies from his fear of ghosts.

This single instance proves to how great an extent Strindberg works upon his own experiences, and it also shows that his imagination is of a nature to magnify everything to a degree that is quite immense. It is a characteristic trait in his nature. His imagination is not the weak, tame, conventional imagination of a bourgeois, which is elsewhere commonly met with in literature. It is the imagination of a savage, in which every impression is echoed a thousandfold on the sounding-board of fear. It is fresh as the wind that blows from the mountains and no less incessant. It is always at first hand, and that is the secret of its power. After reading Strindberg you may raise objections against his arguments, but at the moment you are forced to agree with him. There has never been an author who could convince with such brutal authority as he.

As long as you are under his immediate influence, everything seems possible, even probable. While recognising the truth of the principal traits, you forget the numerous errors that are never absent, the superabundance of evil qualities which he never omits to pile upon his enemies—woman and the lower orders—with both of whom he once felt himself related, and by whom he now feels himself pursued.

The second reason of his immense influence is that he is such a perfect son of this torn, restless,

over-stimulated age, this age with its combination of decadence and barbarism. His writings are full of the plebeian snobbishness, the moralising hypocrisy, the perverse instincts of the sons of the present day, while at the same time they contain the direct opposite: the superhuman effort to rise above himself, to attain beyond good and evil, the unbaptised, grandiose sensuousness, the indignation against femininism and the cult of woman. His is the cry of an indignant nature in a corrupt civilisation. His is the duplicate personality of to-day, cankered and yet healthy, at once the whited sepulchre of the dead past and the vessel of the future. He reflects his secret sufferings, his half-conscious untruthfulness, his conscious boasting, the god and the beast in him.

Yet all combined could not have made his name a torch which will burn long and be held for that which it is not—one of the eternal stars.

It was a twofold influence that helped to create the red flame which proceeds from him: his language, in the first place, which only produces its true effect in the original. German gives it quite a different character, harsh and barren. But in Swedish it is like the sea that breaks upon the shore and thunders from afar, like the trumpet that brays its battle signal through the night, like the short hollow beat of fortune: "I am there, I am there!"

There are northern writers who can be rendered in German, taught new nuances, enriched with

new words and new rhythm, and in whom the symphonies of the German language may be heard to advantage. But if any one tries to translate Strindberg the result is disappointing; in Swedish the sound is like bell metal, in German it resembles tin.

Materialism is the second influence which makes Strindberg a giant of his age. He has the materialist's philosophy of life, the materialist's ideal, the materialist's cult of the intellect, and the materialist's interpretation of the sexes. However deep the problem, his interpretation is always flat. In his descriptions everything is clear, sharp and rectangular; he is like an inquisitor who only enquires into that which lies above the threshold of consciousness, and only sees the growth on the rough, hard surface. The rich fruitful soil in the unseen, where everything that exists must grow organically like the seed in mother earth, is as good as undiscovered by the great and noble mind of the materialist.

As a materialist he does not acknowledge the mystic element—which is love—in the relations between man and woman; but the union, without love, of two persons of culture leads in course of time to degeneration, and this degeneration he has always very consistently described.

Woman: "Fin de Siècle"

Guy de Maupassant

I

I HAD been to a hypnotic *séance* and was on my way home across the Paris boulevards. The sirens of the *trottoirs* were sitting in front of the brightly-lit *brasseries* with their lords, drinking beer, while others were still wandering up and down under the wide awnings in front of the *cafés*. The thought occurred to me how much the type had altered during the last four years; it used to be the fashion to be as slim as a willow, with stays like a coat of mail, but now loose, negligent figures were to be seen under tight-fitting dresses, and where formerly people used to wear buds, they now decorated themselves with full-blown flowers. The rattling of the omnibuses mingled with the strident music of a Roumanian band in one of the neighbouring *brasseries*, and one's eyes were dazzled by the glitter of real and false diamonds, and by the glances of their wearers, real or false as the case might be. The faces of the multitude as they swept past me were confounded in my mind with those I had just seen in the over-heated

hall where the hypnotic *séance* had taken place. The perfumes that were wafted through the air were transformed in the memory of my olfactory nerves to the penetrating scents of musk, patchouli and *poudre-de-riz*, which the Parisian ladies carry with them into all theatres, omnibuses, and picture galleries whither they go, charging the atmosphere with a strong, oppressive, artificial odour, exquisitely compounded, and dry as the colours of the majority of modern French artists—a suspicious atmosphere, the excessive sensibility of which suggests sickness and hidden corruption. Again I seemed to see the faces of those who surrounded me in the close atmosphere of the small room where the newest fashionable pastime, a demonstration of the "magic circle," had taken place—empty, weak, brutal, affected faces, such as form the larger portion of every popular assembly; and suddenly I realised, what my instinct had long since told me, the difference that exists between the expression on the faces of this race and the expression on the faces of that other race, to which I myself belonged, and which in its national varieties I had taken infinite trouble to understand, perhaps not altogether without success.

This *séance* of hypnotic, magnetic experiments was given by a new literary and theosophical set of young Frenchmen, called "the Adepts"; the people who assembled to witness the performance were members of the lower middle class, and ladies

and gentlemen from all circles of society. The discovery of which I have spoken came upon me suddenly from under the giant roof of a straw hat trimmed with a wreath of roses, where I caught sight of a strange, death-like, glassy look in the eyes of a smiling beauty of uncertain age. I was struck by the number of cadaverous physiognomies which rendered it almost impossible to guess the age of Parisians, whether men or women. Young people wore the same expression as those of riper years, and even extreme youth had something ashen grey in the complexion, something that was like a breath of mildew, unpalpable, deceptive, as of premature old age. In the north everybody looks about as old as he is, not only according to the fixed sum of his years, but also according to the varying life-limit which is determined by a person's vitality. There we have old and young and middle-aged. But here the majority are neither old nor young, and for the women there is no middle age. What is the reason? Is it entirely owing to the art of dress? Or is it due to that *memento mori* of an ancient civilisation—a counterfeit susceptibility? When we compare the French fashion papers with the faces of young Frenchwomen, the former might be taken for portraits. Here and there the same sweet smile which renders the mouth small and pointed, the same studied charm, the same artificial personality and excessive caution which mask the woman's real nature until all that is

spontaneous about her—age, soul, instinct—is for ever lost. It is perfectly true that these expressionless faces are to be met with everywhere. In Germany there is a large percentage of ladies in good society whose faces look like copies of the illustrations in magazines provided for family reading. But beneath it all there is something else, something absolutely different, a kind of broad, and as yet unspoilt, natural foundation in the Teutonic race, which compares favourably with the more and more narrowed, almost extinct nature in the Gallic race.

That which struck me most about these restless, expressionless eyes, was not the absence of soul in them which one notices in the German who broods over his beer and toddy, but an empty look such as you find in the eyes of a dead animal—an absence of feeling, a vacant stare, the Narcissus-look of self-reflecting satisfaction. . . .

The omnibus for which I was waiting had not arrived, and I remained standing in front of a bookseller's table where the newest publications were displayed. There in a row, side by side, lay *Flirt*, by Paul Hervieux; *L'Amour Artificiel*, by Jules Cazes; *L'Inutile Beauté* and *Notre Cœur*, by Guy de Maupassant. They lay there like a continuation of my thoughts, confirming the truth of those observations of which I had as yet hardly convinced myself. I came nearer and examined *Notre Cœur*, and meditated on the new element

which this book contains, and on the old element which caused it to run through three editions in a fortnight. Old mingled with new, boldness with conventionality, there you have the secret of the best and most critical of modern French romance writers, Guy de Maupassant, Paul Bourget, and J. K. Huysmans, combined with that unsurpassable art of telling a story, that short, simple clearness of diction which renders Guy de Maupassant the greatest of the three.

An open carriage came driving out of a side street. A pretty little woman in a light-coloured dress lay back with her head resting against the cushions as though exhausted with lassitude and ecstasy, and under her large, yellow straw hat, pressed against her face, was the face of a man dressed in black who was sitting beside her, kissing her like one possessed, without ever raising his head, oblivious of all else. . . .

It looked like the old French love, the love of Heloïse and Manon Lescaut and George Sand. The French women of to-day have ceased to love like that; it is only paid love that loves in that fashion now. The ladies of the *bourgeoisie* and the *hautes mondaines* do not love any more, and cannot love any more. That is exactly what those three books, lying side by side on the bookseller's table, have to tell: *Flirt*, *L'Amour Artificiel*, and *Notre Cœur*.

II

There is a strangely feeble pulsation in these three books, the voice is hushed, the colours broken. In reading them we seem to sit as on a rainy day in a finely furnished, richly perfumed drawing-room, before an open fire-place with a red glass screen, in which the flame flickers and is magnified, producing an effect that is wonderfully sleepifying and unreal. Yet in the midst of all this luxury we can hear the pattering of the rain outside, and our souls shiver as the artificial home comforts glide further and further away, and we are left surrounded by cold and emptiness. . . .

The reason is that the women who live in this home have no warmth to give, their charms are restless and unsatisfying, their vanity is cruel and insatiable, they need men as they need the mirrors in their dressing-rooms, in order that they may be surrounded by them and able to see their own images reflected from every possible point of view.

The new element in these French writers consists in their having simultaneously discovered and appropriated this type, a type which is international, but which, in its psycho-physiological development can only be properly studied through the medium of a French author's unprejudiced views, and only properly appreciated by the moral large-heartedness of a French public.

The women in these books are ladies, of whom it is said in society that they are "without reproach." Their conduct is blameless, they never forget themselves. They keep within the bounds of innocent flirtation, and have developed the same to the dimensions of a science which renders them almost irresistible; they are intelligent coquettes, and they are more, they are creative coquettes, who turn themselves into works of art, and only as such do they wish to be admired and enjoyed; they are *objets d'art* which must not be touched or handled, and their cunning consists in endowing these works of art with an appearance of life, soul and passion. They, with their empty natures, are not satisfied with emptiness in the opposite sex.

They have a longing to replenish their own natures at the cost of others, and they cling like vampires to the men who have something to give, and who are able to vouchsafe to them the delight of seeing them suffer. For they never satisfy the wishes which they have awakened. They never forget themselves.

So far it is fortunate for the man who falls in love with them that they do not forget themselves, for however worthless their gifts may be, there is nothing so worthless as the gift of themselves. All the disappointments of which they are the cause are as nothing compared to the disappointment of the man when he clasps them in his arms. There is something strangely soulless and impersonal about them, his heart seems

to beat against a lifeless body, no warmth encircles him, no electric stream proceeds from them, they give him no joy, nor do they experience any. These women who have so much mind, cleverness, intelligence and reflection, who are so beautiful, so fashionable, so superior—they have no nature. They are like those barren ears of corn that tower above the corn-field with their long stalks and slender pannicles, waving to and fro, and attracting attention to themselves, but in whose husks we find no seed. They are like those large empty nuts, which, when cracked, are found to contain nothing but a little mildew. And all the while they seek for that which is lacking in themselves, they like to talk about the weariness of life, the vanity of hope, the secret attractions of love; they tease and charm and beckon from afar, they let it be supposed that they have much to give, yet all their desire is to play with their idle delicate fingers upon the soul of man as upon an instrument of music. They want to strike a note to hear it sound and vibrate, and they make themselves his friends for the sake of being loved, and of quivering with the passion of self-love, they nod to their reflections in the mirror, and invent a new way of doing the hair, or a new and sprightly *aperçu* when they find that they have succeeded in their desire, which is to experience a faint reflex glow from the feelings which they have kindled in man.

Their looking-glass is their lover, their sole

interest is centred in themselves, the aim and object of their lives is to be self-conscious, and life for them consists in circling round themselves.

Men of this sort, men who are sterile egoists, have frequently been described; but until now no one has ever probed the depths of woman's lack of feeling. Here, as in almost every subject that is new to literature, the French are the first to lead the way. But in real life these types meet us long before literature sees them and makes them her own, and women have long been familiar with this side of one another's nature. The silent struggles which man does not perceive, and which both parties conceal from him, the coquette from vanity and her rival from pride, these silent struggles are legion as the sacrifices which they have cost.

It is not moral prejudice that restrains the best types of the species from satisfying the more or less forbidden love which they awaken, for they pride themselves on their open minds; and it is not cowardice, for they are clever enough to escape any suspicion of scandal attaching to themselves; their inward coldness is the only cause. They are not willing to disturb themselves, lest in so doing the work of art, which is their own selves, should discover its defects. They lose nothing, or if they do, it is their imagination that is the loser. And if at the last they forget themselves it is not their blood or their heart, but it is the glow of reflex desire that forgets itself.

III

The coquette in *Flirt* is a lady of the ordinary bourgeois type. She is determined to have admirers at any price, and despises no means whereby to capture the indifferent, fears no humiliation if only she can render submissive those who seek to resist her, nor does she hesitate to hold out hopes wherewith to attract the doubtful. She would have them all burn on the altar of her vanity like incense rising in her nostrils, but for the sake of convenience she remains an honourable woman. Her toilet is the sole occupation of her mind; to charm and afterwards reject is the daily excitement without which she cannot live.

L'Amour Artificiel is a truer and more striking picture of the age. Jules Cazes has emancipated himself from the conventional French custom of never describing any erotic experiences except those of married women. This story takes place before marriage. Stella is a daughter of the Plutocracy, probably half a Jewess, spoilt, pretentious, talented, with all the coldness of soul and temperament that belongs to the emancipated woman, and which she mistakes for pride, she has that same feeling of superiority over the man combined with the consciousness of being unloveable—a new type that is very un-French, and which offers a singular proof of the manner in which foreign influence has forced its way through the closed

circle of culture belonging to French perception. Stella is a young lady imbued with the tone of Ibsen's and Kielland's women's rights women. Her story is a continual withering of the soul.

She has a fine voice and a remarkable talent for execution, but what is she to sing when she feels nothing? She is a stranger to the depths of life; a young girl *comme il faut*, belonging to the moneyed aristocracy, is not likely to experience anything very deep—from lack of disposition, lack of opportunity, or both; she is unbearably bored in the society to which she belongs, and has a longing for sensations; her mornings are spent in gazing at herself in the looking-glass, in paying visits and trying on dresses, in annoying her friends, and in practising the newest songs; but how in the world is she to spend her evenings? She lures a penniless young author, flirts with him and makes prodigious advances, only to chase him away again like a dog. The young man sees through her game, but his poor, foolish head is turned by her perfumes, her fashionable dresses and her cold, proud beauty, and his sufferings are quite sufficient to afford her an agreeable distraction. The type which she represents bears a certain resemblance to that which Marie Bashkirtseff records in her diary. It is the same fever of girlhood, the same wild desire to attract men, the same self-deification combined with the utter incapacity for loving which undermined that great talent and hot temperament, and drove its possessor to an early illness and

death. But Stella is far from possessing a hot temperament. She has that injured consciousness of her actions which is the property of all calculating souls. She seizes one initiative after the other with regard to the poor silly youth, to whose modest mind the idea never occurs of seducing such a self-possessed young lady. But Stella, who has been over hasty in breaking with her intended who did not allow himself to be sufficiently tyrannised over to please her, has grown anxious to be married. Without love, without tenderness, without ever forgetting herself, cold and brutal, she tempts him to the act of love. The hardness of her heart undergoes no change through the experience, and when soon afterwards her father becomes bankrupt, she marries a rich old dandy who had always been the object of her scorn.

In this study of a girl the new element is compounded of shallow curiosity and soulless impulse; it is an unprejudiced attempt to depict a degenerate woman, who among the many caricatures of nature and society, is no rarity; it is a step on the way towards a psychological analysis of modern humanity. Though it were nothing more than a search after a truer description of human nature than that presented to us in the models of the old æsthetic school, the author would still have rendered an undoubted service.

The cleverest and most profound study of a

woman occurs in the description of Madame de Burne in Maupassant's *Notre Cœur*.

Maupassant was in fact the only realist among modern French authors, whereby I mean that he had the clearest and most spontaneous vision for the nature of things and their connection with one another; he had that nobility of temperament and sense of proportion that never thrust itself between the world and himself, to distort the former after the manner of a bad looking-glass. He let the facts speak for themselves, and as he was possessed of that health which neither requires the digestive expedient of moralising, nor yet that of sentimentalising, one could feel tolerably certain of protection from the so-called "contemplation of the world," from which one never escapes in the writings of Daudet, Zola and Bourget. It is certainly not the great depths that are measured in such transparent water, but we will return to that subject another time.

Notre Cœur is a very clever book, and Madame de Burne, herself a clever lady, is at the same time a very clever study of a woman. There is a philosopher in the book, a French novelist called Lamarthe, who has many characteristics in common with Paul Bourget, amongst others an unceasing interest in the analysis of woman. This man, who loves in order that he may study the object of his affections, and in whose mind the most intimate experiences are changed into psychological perceptions, passes the following judg-

ment on the present generation of ladies in society.

"No, they are not women; the more we know them, the less they give us that sensation of sweet intoxication which the real woman never fails to give. Look at their toilets; they are birds, they are flowers, they are serpents, but they are not women. The object of their lives is to rival one another and to pursue their admirers. It amuses them to see men overpowered, conquered and governed by the irresistible force of woman, and, as time goes on, the tendency develops like a hidden instinct, and grows gradually into an instinct of war and conquest. Take Madame de Burne for an example. She is a widow. Perhaps it was her marriage with a despotic churl that awoke in her heart a longing to execute vengeance, a sombre craving to make men suffer for all that she had endured at the hands of one of them, to feel herself for once the strongest, able to bend the will of others, to inflict suffering, and to conquer opposition. But before all else she is a born coquette. Her heart does not hunger for emotion, like the hearts of tender and sensitive women. She does not desire the love of one man, she does not seek the happiness of a strong passion; what she would like is the admiration of all, and if you would remain her friend, you must love her. It is not the real wine of former times. Love was different under the Restoration, it was different under the Second Empire, and now it has become different

again. When the romanticists idealised women and made them dream dreams, women introduced into life the experiences of their hearts whilst reading. Nowadays you pride yourselves on the suppression of all deceitful, poetic glamour, and your novels are as dry as your lives; but believe me, no more love in your books, no more love in your lives!"

Afterwards he continues: "Look at this Madame de Burne who is so charming, so amiable, so clever and so fascinating. It is not her wishes that torment her, it is her nerves. She thinks, she does not feel; or she thinks her feelings. She is proud of her intellect and has no idea of the narrowness of her intelligence. Nothing interests her in which she cannot make herself the central point. She expects too much from men, she expects too much from their goodness, their nature, their character, their delicacy, while she herself never has anything to give that is not for every one alike. Woman was created and came into the world for two purposes—for love, and for the child. But this kind of woman is incapable of loving and does not wish for children. If she happens to have any, they are a misfortune and a burden to her."

Then follows a subtle criticism of this entire group of women, who are to be met with in all countries at a certain level of culture, especially where comfortable circumstances predominate. Flowery declaimers for the most part, women

who interest themselves in every kind of question —pampered beings with numerous wants and an affectation of simplicity. A description of these "détraquées contemporaines," to whom Madame de Burne belongs, flows from the pen of Lamarthe in his novel called *One of Them*. He writes as follows:

"They are a new race of women with reasoning, hysterical nerves excited by a thousand contradictory emotions, which are hardly worthy of being called wishes; disappointed with life without having tasted anything owing to lack of experience; void of passion, void of affection, they unite the temper of spoilt children with the dulness of aged sceptics."

IV

The great merit of these books consists in the boldness with which they force their way into a new and intricate sphere of psychological study. They lay hold on woman in the hidden depths of her personality, as one who stands alone and lives her own life—her life of the many days, weeks, months, years, when she grows in herself, educates and miseducates herself in the loneliness of her being, in that inner life which is made up of wishes, dreams, hopes and disillusions, before any appointed man and any appointed event appears on the horizon of her soul. And should the

appointed man and the appointed event come at last, or should anything else, anything unexpected come into her life, it very often happens that the entire spiritual construction is already completed, the material hardened, and the feelings have lost their power of adaptability. These phenomena and their offshoots have as yet scarcely been taken into consideration by literature. Novels have always begun with love when dealing with woman, and the subject was always her relationship to man, or her preparation for that relationship. But this is a simplification of the subject which rests on the ingenuousness of an obsolete philosophy of life. Life is not as simple as ruder minds would have us think; and before all else there is one fact that deserves recognition: Life advances and humanity changes.

We are standing on the threshold of a new culture, the nature of which depends on the mental and spiritual qualities of the individuals who are its bearers. It may be like a mighty bird which spreads its broad wings and soars into the darkest space of futurity, or it may be like a misshapen monster that falls to the earth. We have never yet caught sight of the bird with the broad wings, but of monsters we have already seen several.

The contributions of French culture have hitherto been the forerunners of a highly susceptible race. But the signs are not wanting to show that the genuine stream of literary production in France is beginning to wane.

Even in these books there are interesting and deep-rooted problems leading up to the conventional *Chambre garnie* love, which must never be absent from any novel that is to satisfy the French public. The French are conquerors, but they are not colonists.

It is left to the Teutonic intellect to force its way into these preserves, to plough the ground and to enter into possession.

An Author on the Mystery of Woman

Barbey D'Aurevilly

IN Paris for some time past, Lemerre has been publishing the collected works of the Norman author, Barbey D'Aurevilly. They are edited by a lady who was a friend of the author's, and from time to time a new volume falls like a heavy weight on the book-market. They march along in two columns—the first is called *Les Oeuvres et les Hommes*, and consists of reviews of books and plays long since forgotten. These criticisms, most of which were written hurriedly during the many years when he occupied the post of critic to a paper which exists no more, are issued in a set of fine quarto volumes with beautiful, clear print. The second series consists of his novels and short stories, containing much imperishable matter belonging to that everlasting species that was, is and will be as enduring as the primal laws of existence, and these are published in the most fascinating little octavo volumes with pearl lettering, so fine that after two hours' reading our eyes are quite worn out and our heads begin to whirl. It was thus ordained by feminine wisdom. The ephemeral criticisms were to take their stand in

monumental form as appropriate counter-balance, while the imperishable novels were to look as pretty and dainty as possible and to behave with as much coyness as young maidens in the presence of the reader, because it was thought that they possessed attraction enough, even when it was necessary to enjoy them with the help of a microscope. Let us hope that the cunning lady was not mistaken; but Barbey D'Aurevilly was not a popular author in his lifetime, and it is to be feared that the trying circumstances under which he has lately been placed within reach of the public will serve to frighten away omnivorous readers and all who are in the habit of reading quickly.

It may be that this young lady, now grown old, who nursed the man of seventy and eighty with a mixture of motherly love and hero-worship, who served and cheered him and now carefully guards herself from appearing as the editor of his works, although the entire literary world of Paris recognises her as such—it may be that in this she has preserved the same course of exclusiveness which was the peculiar characteristic of her author during his life-time. Perhaps she does not wish that the common herd should read him? Perhaps she has chosen the nonpareil type for the purpose of raising a protecting barrier between him and the reading public? It may be her wish to admit only the strong souls and genuine readers who can stand the test of small print, and who have no objection

to spoiling their eyes; readers of the kind who never swallow any book, who only care to digest a couple of pages a day. There are not more than two hundred such readers in Europe and about as many in Boston and New York. But these two hundred will love her author and carry his memory with them to the grave.

When Barbey D'Aurevilly died a few years ago in a small room in one of the quiet side streets off the Bon Marché, little more was known of him either in the history of literature or in his public life than that he used to dress in a very eccentric and remarkable manner in his younger days, and that both in his conversation and in his writings he displayed an obsolete and antiquated form of Catholicism. It was not likely that a man such as he would be considered a great author; Hugo and Gautier, Dumas fils and Zola were very different people. They occupied themselves with "modern problems," they were liberal and radical, pessimists and writers who described the habits and customs of the day. None of them were reactionary, least of all orthodox Catholics. And latterly, when the Church has regained her influence, and devotion has increased to so great an extent that even the profoundly sceptical Bourget finds it convenient to become more and more Catholic in every new book that he writes,—even this did not make any appreciable difference to Barbey. He is too strong, too liberal, too radical and too terribly realistic to be welcomed by modern piety.

In these days of exploding bombs, the anxious souls who take refuge under the dreamy arches of the Church do not want to be still more terrified by the reading of books. Times may change as they like, but Barbey D'Aurevilly never was in harmony with the spirit of the age, he is not in harmony with it now, and in the form that his friend has published his books, there is ample prospect of his continuing to remain out of harmony with it.

A man who has such a difficult and doubtful prospect of fame must be already a great author —or nothing at all.

Paul Bourget was of the former opinion when, after Barbey's death, he wrote a clever and valuable essay upon him, aided by the advantage of a personal acquaintance. This essay is now out of print; he omitted to republish it in his *Etudes Psychologiques* on celebrities of the age, like the Goncourts, Amiel, Turgenev, even Taine and Stendhal. For Barbey is too strong, he leaves the Renaissance figure of Stendhal far behind.

It was a sad, quiet worshipper of Barbey's who first turned my attention to his works. The author had dedicated a small book to her, almost with his dying hand; the dedication was one of those graceful, pathetic inscriptions which are now a lost art. When I began to read him his style influenced me like the sharp, bitter smell and the infinite breadth of the sea, while his descriptions of life's mystery ran through me like the stab

of a knife, causing me to shudder with a suppressed cry as only a woman can cry when she sees the innermost sanctuary of her womanhood exposed to the public gaze. Shakespeare is the only one who has this greatness without mercy, this self-sufficing completeness of a human being, this pride which is justice, moral law, religion and a world to itself. There is nothing so vile, nothing so horrible but would necessarily experience a shudder of exaltation when exposed to the world's gaze. Barbey D'Aurevilly belongs to the race of Shakespeare.

He belongs to it in the actual sense of the word and also on account of his Norman descent. There is nothing of the Gaul in him either in his moral judgment, in his views of life, or in his sympathies and antipathies. He is a landscape painter, which no truly French writer has ever been, he is a lover of solitude in remote country districts, a lover of nature on the lonely seashore. He is not a townsman and he escapes as often as he can from Paris, the centre which is looked upon by every successful Frenchman as the only beautiful, honourable, interesting and pleasurable place in which to dwell. He has no frivolity, he does not care for pleasure, but on the contrary he has a grandiose mood and an iron grasp of the situations which he describes. He seeks the more veiled sides of human nature, but there is a modesty in his descriptions known only to Northerners, and not to Italians and Gauls. He is

the fellow-countryman of Flaubert and Maupassant, but he has none of the plebeian exclusiveness of the first or the Rabelais Gallicism of the second. He is of pure race to an extent that is unheard of and inconceivable—a Scandinavian Norman without any of the ponderous blood of the Anglo-Saxon, so often found in Shakespeare and his contemporaries, but which the course of centuries has served to dissipate until it has completely vanished.

When we look at his portrait we are unconsciously reminded of certain pictures by the younger Holbein in the Windsor Gallery and in the collection at Bâle; there is the same peculiar combination of refinement and strength scarcely ever met with among his contemporaries, the same sharp, subtle moulding of the features which is only produced in a race of long standing. His head recalls to our memory another, the head of one who is not long dead, more massive perhaps, less developed, more thoughtful, but with an equally calm expression; a head belonging to the same racial type, with the same proud, princely features, the same prominent nose with the large eyes of a discoverer—the head of a Normandy peasant, of Millet, his fellow-countryman, the creator of a new feeling for nature and a new aspect of nature in art.

The one feature that separates Millet from all other artists, in his drawings far more than in his heavy, dull-coloured paintings, is that he saw

his people as one with nature. Where is the difference in Millet's picture between the flock of ravens alighting on the autumnal field in the midst of the grey eternity of a damp day, and the man and woman who, with rake and spade stuck in the ground beside them, stand praying at the sound of the Angelus in a position which is of itself a silent devotion at the approach of darkness? Just as the forms of the flying ravens break the great self-sufficiency of the landscape and thereby attract attention to it, so the powerful simple outlines of the man and woman are only a more emphatic expression of the solemn silence which the evening casts over the land. Just as Millet places his people in the landscape, as an inseparable part of nature; one with her, so Barbey D'Aurevilly places his characters on the great, lonely sea-coast, on the yellow sands and the long, flat, green meadows of storm-bound Normandy. The outlines here are the same as there, standing out great and simple in their solemnity, silent and weird as fate against the great, simple, peaceful landscape. In the same way that Millet's women stand firm and immoveable as a mountain against the everlasting heavens, so Barbey D'Aurevilly's defiant yet submissive women stand in relief against the eternal landscape of their native country, with the same powerful simplicity of Millet's pictures, inflexible as regards strange and transitory laws, but submissive to the laws that appeal to them from the depths of their own natures.

Just as Millet's peasant woman strides across the melancholy field, weak yet unhesitating, individualistic, yet ever the same woman who yesterday was, to-day is, and to-morrow will be, so *L'Ensorcelée*, the large-proportioned, plain-thinking daughter of an ancient and aristocratic house, wanders home from church across the fields in spring, with the glow of an eternal flame in her honest face—the glow of a passion conceived in church when in the pulpit she descried the man whom she is proud to own as her master at the first glance. This woman is the childless wife of a rich plebeian at the time of the French Revolution; and the man—is he any different from that peasant of Millet's who draws on his coat, standing alone on the broad plains after a hard day's work? The mantle of an emperor in the picture of a coronation is not more imposing than this raised arm, standing in relief against the grey heavens, and commanding respect as though it were engaged in the performance of a fearful and holy action, instead of being merely the outline of a strong, rough, tired figure in a lonely field. And what is it but the peasant strength and peasant greatness of this former *Chouan*, now a priest of Barbey's, that attracts the nobleman's daughter, wife of the *parvenu*, when she sees him in church during the procession and catches sight of his face hidden beneath the cowl,—a face that has been unrecognisably lacerated in battle against the soldiers of the French Revolution,—at the

sight of which she is consumed with a mad, wild, passionate love. She was a woman in whom her own sub-conscious strength called for the strongest man, and felt with a shudder of injured pride: This one is the strongest! And he is the strongest, for this inflexible conspirator will not allow himself to be led astray by any woman, and *L'Ensorcelée*, conscious of the destruction of her womanhood, conscious also of the ignominy of having married beneath her, drowns herself.

This is one of Barbey's women who perished, a woman with the nature of a mighty ancestress whose pride in her race and family was long suppressed by a marriage repugnant to her inmost instincts, till at last, in a moment of fearful agitation, she revolted. The same primal instinct accompanied by the same horrible, unrelenting spirit, where the conscience is dead during the perpetration of a crime, appears in that unparalleled story, called *Le Bonheur dans le Crime.* A proud, pure girl poisons the wife of the man whom she loves, and poisons her with as much ease as a lover might have done in the days of the early Italian Renaissance—(one of those incomprehensible women with the passionate lips, as Botticelli paints them)—she poisons the wife under his very eyes, with his silent consent, and then, in the same house, with the same furniture, surrounded by the same solitary sequestered nature, these two celebrate their honeymoon, which lasts without interruption for weeks, months, years,

scores of years, and they are true to one another and happy for a whole life-time; not only do they feel no remorse, but they are able to live without giving a single thought to the past. This would not suit Protestant standards, yet these are people such as Shakespeare depicted, figures such as Millet in his pictures placed against the horizon, beings of whom Burkhardt writes in his work on the Italian Renaissance. Conventional characters they are not, but conventional characters are frequently incomplete natures, whereas an individual character is a complete being, a being who is fully developed and who possesses a standard of his own.

How else are we to describe that daughter of the *bourgeoisie* who comes home from the convent where she was educated, to be watched by her parents with a severity that is now unknown? She steals away night after night with bared feet along the stone passages, passes through the bedroom where her parents are and goes to the young officer who is quartered in their house, and one night she dies in his arms, dies so silently and suddenly that she is dead before he has recovered his self-possession. What men are able to transport women into such an ungovernable passion of love? Woman does not create her own passion like man; she is what man makes her. He either binds her instincts or loosens them, he makes her good or bad, cold or passionate, according to the manner in which his temperament affects hers, and

according to how great or how small a degree he himself is the man. Barbey's men are a race peculiar to themselves; they in their various characters, ages, and persons are always himself —natures without lead and sand in their veins, with the fire, the tension, the nervous energy of a full-blooded race.

It is not the Frenchwoman whom Barbey describes, and no Frenchman either could or would describe her as he has done. He is no more of a Gaul than Millet, any more than the Italians of the early Renaissance were real Romans. Like the author Tolstoy, in whom the Mongolian blood is more clearly manifested as he grows older, so with Barbey and Millet, the two great Normans, the Teutonic element appears on the surface, the same element that we recognise in the pictures of the Pre-Raphaelites, and which was afterwards set aside by the intrusion of the Spaniards and the Classics. Millet's landscapes represent the Teutonic aspect of nature; while Barbey's writings are the essence of the Teutonic style, with its characteristic expansion, its abrupt pauses, its utter indifference with regard to the main point, its dislike of concluding the story as soon as the climax is reached. It is here that we find the Teutonic sense for the infinite—a feeling that is the peculiar property of a people who dwell near the sea—a kind of absorption into nature, whither men vanish like black spots. Both are equally possessed of that feeling for the real which

has not existed anywhere in the same degree since the days of the early Italian Renaissance. Millet shews it in the reality of his drawing, Barbey in the reality of individualism in the sexes. It is in this that Barbey stands alone and unequalled by any of the authors of the present day or of the past, and it is this that reminds us that three hundred years of physical and spiritual refinement of human feeling and comprehension lie between him and the age of Shakespeare.

His first youthful work, *Ce Qui Ne Meurt Pas* is broad as a novel by Bulwer and as full of feeling as a poem by Lamartine; already here he strikes the key in which woman's inmost soul vibrates, resounds and awakens to a sense of its most intimate and complicated delight in man. *Ce Qui Ne Meurt Pas* is woman's eternal affection, which eternally manifests itself, even when the woman is no longer young; she is the beloved mother whom the man, especially when he is quite young, loves more ardently than he could possibly love a young girl, and through him she becomes a mother—a matron already in her soul. Both in his aphorisms and in the most popular of his novels, *Vieille Maîtresse*, Barbey continually returns to this deepest of all man's passions for the woman whom he sees growing old beside him, and who for him grows young again; the woman to whom he is bound by a thousand inextricable memories, memories of his childhood when his own mother was young, memories of youthful happiness and of

his own youthful manhood spent with this same woman, whom he still loves. A refined man expects a great deal from woman, and in her who binds him with the cords of love, he will always love the whole woman—the girl, the wife, the mother.

Woman is for Barbey the tragic, by reason of her inevitable destiny. Woman's age is more sharply defined than man's; her youth is more limited. She is unconscious of her own being, and when she realises it, she also realises her destiny. She stands so strong and fearless beneath the pressure of nature, that man cannot think of it without a shudder of intense compassion like that which inspired the deepest of Barbey's stories, called by him *Une Histoire Sans Nom.* The subject of this extraordinary story is a woman who becomes a mother without wishing, without even knowing it. Kleist has described a case somewhat similar in one of his novels, only there the woman is experienced and understands what has happened. Kleist shows little sympathy in his development of the plot, which he describes from the man's point of view, and the novel ends happily; Barbey, on the contrary, lays a pecular stress on the tragic element, on the woman's passiveness,—the reason of her eternal subjection to man—which renders her unable to do anything towards the furtherance or the hindrance of her inevitable destiny. An innocent young girl of sixteen lives alone in the old family mansion with her mother, by whom she

is sternly watched, and where no one is admitted save a missionary preacher of the strictest order who is going his round from church to church. This unsuspecting child has begun to wander in her sleep without attracting the notice either of her mother or the maid, and one night, while she is in a somnambulent condition, the monk meets her on the doorstep and through him she becomes a mother. The following day he goes off on his mission, and both mother and daughter congratulate themselves that the melancholy man has departed. Time passes, until there is no longer any doubt, and the mother begins to torture the daughter, determined to discover how and through whom this can have occurred; the miserable child is terrified and can explain nothing. In this dreadful condition, under circumstances which woman only of all creatures of the earth has to endure, the poor girl's mind undergoes a terrible trial which results in idiotcy.

Barbey's descriptions are physical rather than psychical, and only women can judge of the truth of his psychological divinations, and judge—not with words, but with the quivering of their nervous fibres. It relates not to this one case only, but to thousands of other cases, which to a man would appear quite human and endurable,—cases, not of violence, but merely of error and self-deception.

There is one thing that is known only to ourselves, and that is that woman's most inexorable task-master is woman, as in this instance, when the

otherwise irreproachable mother torments her dearly-loved child. If only on account of this one novel, Barbey may be said to belong to the future, when there will exist a psychology of man and woman and human conditions, of which the germs are only just beginning to show themselves in him and in one or two others.

But what of his Catholicism? He lets the monk die after having undergone a severe penance in a Trappist monastery, after which he receives absolution and is duly reconciled with Heaven. Everything that has broken with nature can be reconciled in nature, because all life is only a fragment and a groping in the darkness, and in the deepest sense there exists no immutable link between cause and effect, crime and punishment. The innocent must suffer more than human martyrdom, while the guilty escapes with an insignificant, but as he supposes, just penance. Barbey's Catholicism is that great, deep, intuitive understanding that fathoms all humanity.

How do we Stand?

IN this book I have tried to draw a characteristic sketch of the eight most remarkable heads among the legion of authors belonging to the nineteenth century. I have not stopped to make any literary estimates, as these are of no lasting importance, because they vary with the change of standards. What I have done is to uncover and expose to view the subject-matter of their productions. I have tried to drag forward the personality of the author, in order that the man may be measured by his work, and the work by the man; for a man's work is no fortuitous incident. The man and his work are one; the work of a manly man is man's work, the work of an effeminate man is fancy work, and the work of a half man is half work.

Now I ask: What is it that we women have to demand from the men of this century who have offered to be our guides, teachers, deliverers, cavaliers and religious teachers? And this is our reply: We ask that they should be men, nothing more. The more manly they are, the more womanly we shall be—preaching and education, rivalry and competition, boasting and flattery are

all of no good, only the manly man can redeem the womanly in woman; all else is make-believe.

Let us consider these eight representative men in relation to their work. We must confess that the oldest and the two youngest among them have bequeathed man's work, by which we mean lasting work which will be valued more highly as time goes on. The manliness of their work is proved by the fact that they looked neither to the right nor to the left, nor hearkened to the course of time, nor winked at the women, but said what they had to say—neither more nor less—and wrote what they were obliged to write, owing to their personal temperament. None of them wrote for us, neither Keller, Barbey nor Maupassant, nor did they stop writing to wonder what we should say. They never thought about us at all, and that is why they are the greatest of women's authors, not the authors for the women of yesterday, to-day or to-morrow, but the interpreters of woman, authors from whom we can learn to understand ourselves as we gaze upon the reflection of our own images in the soul of man.

The authors who were young about the middle of this century form a group apart, and they treat both us and themselves with equal solemnity. How excellent are their intentions, and how deep their interest in us! They want to raise us, purify and deliver us, and they want to do it so thoroughly that they would rejoice if they could deliver us from our womanhood. They write for us, they

appeal to us—Björnson, Ibsen, Heyse, Tolstoy, Strindberg—each in his own way. The one would have us be intellectual women, the other sexless women, and the third (in his latter years) would like to make us into apple dumplings with whipped cream, the fourth into men-haters, etc. We have their permission to be anything we like —doctor, professor, and a lady to the tips of our fingers, only not the mother of future generations to whom nothing human is strange, because she carries humanity at her breast.

It is thus that the half man seeks to create woman in the likeness of his own image, to make her only half a woman.

There have never been so many books written in any century as in ours, when so much is written that men have long ceased to read at all, and they are by no means the worst men who do not care for literature. But women read for two; and the authors, who live by being read, write for the cultivated, thinking, studious woman—for the woman with the adjective.

Time passes, the century is drawing to a close, and the bankruptcy of its "intellectual attainments" becomes ever more apparent. Are we women to allow ourselves to be the only ones who are duped into the next century by these same intellectual attainments? Or shall we take our fate into our own hands and measure our being by a higher standard than that of "Liberty, Equality, Fraternity?"

In order to do that there is no necessity for us to read the books that are written for women —it were better to read those that are written for men. Reading is a substitute for "living." If we would build up for ourselves a life out of our own womanhood, we need have no recourse to authors, thinkers and prophets, such as this anæmic century produces; we must turn to our own natures—not to our intellect, for that will not bring us very far, but to our instinct. And it seems to me that the first signs are already to hand, that woman will again determine to be nothing more, but also nothing less, than the mother of future generations.

PRINTED BY
TURNBULL AND SPEARS,
EDINBURGH